

Encounter

July 1975

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Story by Nadine Gordimer

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SIBLINGS (story)	3	Nadine Gordimer
HOW VIRTUES BECOME VICES:	11	Alasdair MacIntyre
MEDICINE & SOCIETY		
MEN & IDEAS		
MARX/ENGELS AND RACISM	18	W. H. Chaloner & W. O. Henderson
THEATRE		
ANOTHER PLAY FOR PINTERITES	24	John Weightman
SCIENCE		
BEHAVIOURISM, PRO & CONTRA	27	H. J. Eysenck
POETRY		
Jenny Joseph 10, Geoffrey Holloway 26, Frank Ormsby 31, Peter Redgrove 32, Alistair Elliot 33, Neil Powell 91		
NOTES & TOPICS		
DR SPOCK THINKS AGAIN	34	Kenneth Minogue
SPECIAL BOOK SECTION: LITERATURE & CRITICISM		
LEAVING THE FIFTIES	40	Malcolm Bradbury
A GRID OF CODES	52	Bernard Bergonzi
THE TREMULOUS HOMELY-FACED		
CREATURE	60	Laurence Lerner
THE YEARS THAT ARE PAST	66	P. N. Furbank
A MODEST MOVEMENT	72	John Fuller
REMEMBERING THE MASTER	76	Peter Porter
EAST & WEST		
ON REVEALING "THE LAST SECRET"	80	Don Cook
AUTHORS & CRITICS		
"FOREIGN AID, FOREVER?"	87	Robert Cassen
A REPLY	90	P. T. Bauer
IN THE MARGIN		
FROM SARTRE TO SOLZHENITSYN	94	M.J.L.
LETTERS	92	
AUTHORS	79	

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Nadine Gordimer

Siblings

FIFTEEN WAS THREE YEARS short of the minimum age for a driver's licence but he drove the Mini through the quieter streets of the Johannesburg suburb when he was home in the school holidays and several times he saw her—unmistakably her. Hobbling along in a trailing skirt. Those shoes made her feet look like a dray-horse's hooves; above them, the layers of clothing both skimpy and voluminous, blouse shining with tiny Indian mirrors, washerwoman's crocheted shawl, clung and drooped around her body. She had gone thin again. Sometimes (usually when she had come out of a clinic, he understood) she was, horribly, almost fat and jolly, with those fresh scars nobody looked at on the inner side of her wrists. She walked as tramps do, and children let out of school: people who are not going anywhere. Simply alive in the street, into which she seemed to have wandered between one night and the next—her mime's makeup and neon-tinted hair would compose a readable face under indoor lighting.

He didn't have to stop and speak to her if he didn't want to. She did not see him; she didn't notice anything or anyone, existing in flirtatious defiance purely as an object (you could see in the set of her head she was sure of it) other people must be looking at. A wonder she didn't get run over.

Nothing will happen to her, his mother said, in one of those set pieces of family discussion that are the dark side of family jokes—just as repetitious, inevitable, and without hope of a fresh denouement. She will kill my sister, that's all, his mother said. His father became silent once practical measures were not being discussed; such emotionalism was a woman's thing, along with menstruation and giving birth. He himself was silent because when his

mother spoke like this, so venomously, with an unconscious tremor of the head (one of those mascots with neck affixed to a hidden spring within the body that bob in the rear window of some people's cars), she was not his mother but a woman, a being finally separated from himself.

There was another set piece:

You realise if he runs into somebody the insurance won't pay.

He really is very careful.

It's not a matter of what he does. If someone bumps him, he's the one who's committing the offence, no right to be on the road at all. You're encouraging him to break the law.

All right. It's not so serious. If that's the only law he breaks, we. . . . He isn't taking drugs and hanging around with the motorbike crowd. Consider yourself lucky. Only just here in our own suburb. . . .

What was *she* doing, in the suburbs she had so determinedly outcast herself from, anyway? What did she want back here, outside the white walls with hanging gardens of bougainvillaea, and plaster doves and classical urns above handsome teak gates bearing plates: BEWARE OF THE DOG. THIS PROPERTY PROTECTED BY VIGILANTE RADIO BURGLAR ALARMS? The mystery of her existence reminded him of her: they had, by consensus—the whole family—at last reluctantly given up, let her go, cut her out of their lives because they couldn't help her; yet there she was. Every morning when he got up in the clamour of bells and voices at school, or here at home deliciously slowly, looking at the clock-hand made by a rod of light through the curtain-gap pointing to the angle of at least ten or half-past, she was beginning a day—somewhere. What sort of day? The terrible things they all knew had happened to

her, the afternoon when the woman who did her washing found her snoring unconscious beside an empty bottle of sleeping pills, the day when she had just strength enough to phone a friend and whisper she had cut her wrists again, the times she had sent desperate appeals (turning from members of the family to distant collaterals as each in succession had "had enough of her") from police stations, under arrest on drug charges, or from the closed sections of clinics he imagined to be worse than jails; such days, swollen and siren in his mind with the panic wah-awah-awah-awah of police cars and ambulances—such days could bear no relation to everyday. Not in his life, or the life of anyone he knew. But hers was one, he was told the doctors said, where every day might be at this breath-holding, lung-bursting pitch. Reminded of her; yes, she had terrified him then, when she was seven and he about four, by holding her breath with her mouth opened in a soundless scream when they quarrelled at play. Her face, going steadily purple-black round that mouth, was always directed straight at him. When tears bulged at last out of her eyes he felt something had bust in her but at least she was alive.

ALIVE STILL; although that childhood they had lived together as more than cousins—her mother and his were identical twins, so that the children were attached, so to speak, one to either breast of the same sustaining being—had opened out around him securely, while she had slit it as a mercenary's bayonet does a womb, and torn herself out, bloody. He asked where Maxine was living now? Well, nobody had heard from her for months, so that meant at least she hadn't been in trouble, she only bothered to make contact when there was a crisis; the last anyone knew was that she had moved into some Hillbrow flat with a woman. That was the latest; she tormented her mother, at a distance, by boasting that she was living as a Lesbian, now. And what did the psychiatrist say? The psychiatrist! (His mother treated him as an adult, she didn't believe in trying to conceal anything from him.) The psychiatrist! That child twists him round her little finger! You know how she's always been. Turns on the charm and lies and cheats

and wheedles, and he becomes her victim, like everybody else. She won't rest until she's destroyed him, too—his professional detachment. Just as she kills everything she needs. As she's destroyed my poor sister.

He said, What happened about R. D. Laing?

From time to time, between dropping the question of her existence altogether, there were these discussions to decide what ought to be done with his cousin. Last holidays there was a suggestion that she might be sent to England to be treated. This woman sitting on the terrace with him, whom, as a child, he had shared indiscriminately as mother with the little girl, was the one who had been supposed to be looking into the possibility. But it seemed the Laing institute was no longer run by the famous man himself. His mother was talking about a letter of advice from someone else with first-hand experience of "disturbed" people: . . . said it would have to be someone—but not her own mother, too late for that, that's out—someone who would stand in relation to her as mother, a family that would provide her with a family, and then one must be prepared to take everything. Accept. No matter what. One word: accept. Anything she does. It might take years, might not even be successful then, yet it's the only way. But what about the other people? If she were to smash—that whole family? In the process? What about them?—And he wrote, yes, that is what I mean: you take her on and you let her do her worst. It's the only way you can help her. You take her on, and if you can't stand it, you have to tell her: go.

The two were alone in the sun, smoking; he did not do so in front of his father, who objected for health reasons. The dog came and nudged its nose into his rich-smelling adolescent armpit; but his mother would not allow the question of this existence to lapse (once again, as it must) without his complicity. If he had shared his mother, he had done so with someone who was, by the same process, a sister.

It's out of the question. Mmmh? You might do it for a man. . . . Or a woman—you might take it on if the person were to be someone you were in love with. Just might. But who could be expected—

He pulled the dog away, then tenderly

wiped its wet eyes with its long ears. She waited, and he looked at her, the look she was waiting for. She said, It's unnatural. —Only saints. In a moment she put out her cigarette and followed by the dog went away into the house carrying the stub, because she disliked people leaving cigarette ends in the terrace pot-plants.

THEY DIDN'T KNOW so it didn't harm them, but of course he did drive to crowded Hillbrow and to town sometimes. What was there to see in the suburbs, with everyone hidden away in private gardens? And in Hillbrow at eleven o'clock one morning he had the amused pleasure of tooting her out of her skin as she stepped off a curb just where he was manoeuvring into a parking space. It was like the times when he would drop from a tree in front of her, when they were little kids. She turned a proud, furious, disdainful face; and then, his blast the trump at which the whole cast of the present fell from her, there emerged not just a smile, her big smile, but a face of pure joy.

You little devil! My Lord Muck! Look who's driving around in cars!

She had a fat friend with her, a girl who hung back patiently on the curb. Most of her friends were like that, following round in the trance of her domination. She said, and then scarcely bothered to address the girl again, This's my cousin, Patrick, we used to play "doctor" together for hours—her eyes opened, enormous, her pale orange Dietrich brows went up like a clown's, her mouth became a huge parody—reproachful, upside-down U—Patty, remember? Naughty naughty—let's touch wees? Oh-hh-hh— And the pallor was gone, she mimed, she laughed, her face was gay and rosy with the buffeting of laughter, her hands were on her half-starved hips, bracelets slopping over the wrists, she rocked from the waist and of course everybody turned to look at that wild girl, there in the street; but perhaps she really was not needing them to clothe her with their curious gaze, this time.

Come, Patty-cake, you're so rich and so GROWN-UP, you are going to buy us doughnuts and coffee—and she took his arm and bent her head as she swept him along, looking up into his face from under long

coppery hair. It took her fancy to assert and caricature the simple fact of her three year's seniority (today was not a time when that other seniority, of disgrace and suffering was taken into account); the only other woman he'd ever escorted like that was an aunt with a gammy leg.

I have a passion for doughnuts. Yesterday I ate—how many was it, four in the morning and five in the afternoon?—yes, I promise you—how many doughnuts did I eat yesterday? But while the fat friend was trying to guess at the reply expected of her, it was not waited for. No, you must order at least three for me—I'm perfectly serious—and one will do for her, she's on a diet. From today. I'm putting her on a *strict* diet. But they're de-licious here, you'll see. There's a gorgeous gob of real apricot jam in the centre.

She was responding to greetings, some flamboyant, some merely laconic signals, all over the coffee bar. He saw for himself evidence of the existence of the days she woke up to, in the quick—and as quickly vanished—changes in her face as she pursed her mouth in popping kisses, lifted a limp hand, raised both palms declamatorily over her head, or showed (the point of a knife) a down-glance that pretended not to notice at all.

I like your hair, Max. You've let it grow.

She smiled at him sweetly. You do, Patrick? You really think it suits me?

Well, that time—at Christmas? It was frizzed. And an awful colour.

Oh, I know. I was a sight. I had to turn up and spoil the Christmas table, the crackers and streamers, the flowers and the Cries of London place-mats with my ghastly ghoulish hair. Oh, I *know*.

Only he would recognise the confidential false-teeth sibilance as that of an old friend of the family who would raise it cheerfully, as you entered the room, to disguise what had been said behind the young people's backs. While Maxine was gossiping about herself her hands were going about the things on the table, helping herself greedily to unappetising balls smelling of fat and sugar; he always tried not to look in the region of those hands, because of the wrists and also because, as now, they shook like an old person's, cigarettes and cups trembled in a perpetually shivering grasp, so that even

while she made you laugh, her hands suggested that she was terrified. Now these wavering hands went from the doughnuts up to her head, in the customary vain gesture of long-haired young girls, and in an instant had whipped off the hair, doffed it like a splendid, plumed hat, and revealed an almost naked skull covered with tufts curled and dyed sunset-yellow.

The friend concertinaed upon her own bulges in outraged laughter. There was applause somewhere above the yelling from the juke box. Someone shouted, Oh Christ, not Maxine— A grandmother in a smart trouser-suit who was treating children to ice-cream was pestered by their scandalised and delighted curiosity: What's the matter with the lady? But what's the lady doing? Then the little one started to cry, tugging at her own hair: Sore! Sore!

The wig was laid upon the fourth chair at the table and smoothed, a pet dog. The blazing sunset head on a frail neck concentrated perfectly on the task of stuffing away doughnuts. He knew that when she was taking pills she didn't eat for days but when you saw how she still could eat, you felt there was nothing much wrong with her, after all.

It didn't really work, Max, because I've seen you a few times. Lately. Hair couldn't have grown that quickly. Even I'm not such a dope . . . though for a moment I did forget. . . . I saw you the other week near our place.

Oh, if I'd've known you were back from school! I'd have come in. Really. How's everyone? You must come to my flat, ay, Patty—you must. It's just near the fire station—you know? Penarth Mansions. An old, old building. Don't go through the front entrance, it's quicker up the fire escape on the right. First door facing you on the first floor. There's someone else's name on the door but don't worry. The caretaker's an old cow who didn't want to let me have the place, so we got a friend to take it and then just moved in. Come anytime, ay? —Give them my love.

WELL THANK GOD for doughnuts. A harmless enough addiction. She say anything about this woman she's living with?

A fat girl was with her; but that couldn't be the one.

Ironic levity suddenly failed. His mother said with distasteful anguish, It's terrible, in its way, that gorging. Infantile. A sign of such deprivation, regression. She craves—I don't know. Neither my sister nor the doctors or anyone else— Is there any difference, for her, between swallowing Mandrax or sugar doughnuts?

He himself felt a weariness, a childish jealousy: so far as he was concerned, he had seen Maxine eating doughnuts with the relish of one of the junior boys at school, jam oozing between her teeth and sugar bristling on her lips. And his mother was so intelligent, she could analyse and explain everything and that was the end of it; she couldn't tell anyone what to do.

Max sends her love, anyway.

Oh, love! I'm tired of hearing about love! A bill that doesn't say what it was contracted for and where or how or in what currency it's got to be paid. Run to more doctors and ask them. Isn't that what her parents have been doing for four years. Love. Makes me shudder. She gets herself beaten up in a Hillbrow dive. You should have seen her poor jaw. Her father has to get up at two o'clock in the morning to bail her out of a police station. She blackmails *your* father—yes, that's what it is, though, poor little devil, she doesn't realise the ugly name for it—when she's prosecuted for wrecking a flat and she knows we'll do anything to protect my sister. Her love. Oh, poor little creature.

But they were pleased he had made contact—as they put it—with Maxine. He could imagine the conversations because he knew how they would go: who knows, perhaps someone near her own age. . . ? He may be able to reach her in a way we can't. They felt they had at least appointed an emissary, even if to territory where they themselves would not venture.

They didn't ask, and he did not tell them whether or not he made efforts to see his cousin again. A quiet period continued. Delicately, not to disturb the calm under which that *existence* lay—ungrappleable treasure or drowned Ophelia with the mime's public face—his mother rubbed the ridge of her nose with her forefinger: What shall we do about Maxine's birthday?

He never remembered any birthday but his own. Her birthday? When?

But don't you know? The sixteenth. Thursday.

Oh yes. She'll be nineteen.

And he was thinking, that means I'll soon be sixteen; only two more years and I'll have a licence.

Maxine's own parents would have to ignore the birthday; they were trying another interpretation of love—the strength to cut oneself off entirely.

NOTHING WAS decided. The small problem slid away under others. But on Thursday morning his mother came in when he was having late breakfast. You know where Maxine lives, don't you? I must take the kid something. It's too dismal to have one's birthday ignored.

Penarth Mansions. The old building near the fire station.

You come with me, she said. Come and give her a birthday kiss. She used to love her birthday parties, showing off, such a pretty little girl and you used to say to me—

It's all a hundred years ago.

Oh I don't mean anything sentimental—I just want to acknowledge she has a birthday like anyone else, and people take the trouble to remember it.

Okay, okay, don't eat me up.

The next problem was what to buy as a present.

Something for the flat? But she's constantly moving, isn't she, that would be out of place, she'd laugh behind our backs.

Why should she *laugh*. You don't understand; she isn't scornful about people like you and Dad and her parents, she's not spiteful. It's herself she's always jeering at. But it's just that she doesn't need things like—towels and things—it's one room—

He did not say that he had been to the flat only once, and Maxine was out; he had sat an hour, waiting, with the chap who was sharing the flat, her boyfriend, he supposed. They looked much the same, he and the boyfriend; both long-haired and wearing shabby boots whose toes had turned up comically with long wear, but the boyfriend had a silky black moustache and he'd taken the fancy to draw a black line round his eyes; a man of twenty or so. They talked about stock-car racing; he had been, or was a special tune-up mechanic and had even owned a racing car.

Maxine did not come. That's how she is, the mouth under the black moustache pronounced, somehow independent of the unchanging inexpressiveness of the rest of the face—You never know with her. Sometimes I don't see her for days. But she'll come right. She just needs someone, like, who won't stand any rubbish from her. They drank two beers apiece and listened to David Cassidy records: She plays them half the night—the whiskery moustache outlined a smile like a pleasant rat's.

In a shop his mother felt would have the sort of thing his cousin would like, they looked at all the out-of-date popular talismans of love, peace, and contemplation that she already had been observed to wear throughout the tumult and violence of her past four years. At last his mother decided upon a dress, a long cotton skirt and top of Indian print, and—since one never knew from one week to the next whether Maxine would be full of doughnuts or emaciated as a Vogue model, if, alas, not for reasons of fashion—arranged that she could exchange it if it didn't fit. Then they drove to the flat and their footfalls rang in silence up the fire escape to the door. At ten in the morning there were sounds of a party going on on the other side but when the door was opened by an African servant in white plastic knee-boots and hoop ear-rings, it was clear she was alone there, with the radio turned high to the African-language commercial programme. Like many servants, her manner towards white people was based on the personality of the white person she worked for. Her smile was Maxine's sweeping, superior yet knockabout one. Like Maxine, on first-name terms with the world in which she could find no place for herself, she spoke of her employer simply as "Maxine." Oh Maxine'll be so sorry, so sorry. She just went out. She says to me, Dora, hang on here till I come back, won't you, because she haven't paid me this week, and she's gone out to a friend to get my money, I think. Oh, she'll be so sorry.

His mother's eyes went round the one room, analysing: the bed a block of foam rubber made up on the floor, curtains on string, peacock feathers in a vase, broken suitcases, smashed mirror; but of all things, a live bird in a white Tunisian cage—an old-fashioned canary, singing against the radio.

You take care of Miss Maxine?

Oh, she's a good girl. You know that? She's very kind to me, Maxine. I come to do the washing every week and when she's—you know, when she's feeling well—she says to me, Dora, come let's have a party. You should see us dancing! She puts on the records and we dance together—really!

That's right, you look after Miss Maxine nicely.

And there was a rand note put easily into the graceful black hand with its broken fingernails under Maxine's brilliant green varnish.

THEY TOOK the parcel with the Indian print dress away with them; there was the question of perhaps having to change it, so it would be best to drop in again on Maxine another day. They had made the effort; they had done what they could. His mother wanted to be left at the hairdressers'; he drove around on errands of his own for a while because he would be going back to school next week and there were certain surrogates for home, freedom, affection it was necessary to take with one—new cassettes, a blue bulb to fix up a sexy lamp in his cubicle and (looking round the supermarket to discover the nature of his need by recognising objects that would seem to be fulfilling), why not?—a couple of those throw-away cigarette lighters made in beautiful colours, purple and lime. He was driving slowly up his own street with his purchases satisfyingly at his side when he saw that Maxine was hurrying, hobbling, making for the house, ahead of him. From her walk—she knew where she was going, she had a purpose, this time—from the way she swung the yard gate and tramped in through the back as all the neighbourhood children used to do, he saw at once that Maxine was coming for her birthday present. She had walked all the way from Hillbrow in those heavy platform shoes to get her present. He slowed the car to let her gain the house and be saved exposure of this beggarly eagerness and excitement with which his eyes did not want to shame her, as they instinctively never looked at her wrists. She must have set out the moment she got home to the flat and the black girl told her her aunt and cousin had come with a parcel.

At the gate he did not turn in but drove once more, very slowly, round the block, first. When he entered the house he found the old cook Lola happily flustered, putting cheese on biscuits for the tea-tray—he knew the kind of greeting Max always gave her, trying to make thin arms meet round Lola's enormous waist, hugging herself to that great, respectably undivided bosom, kissing those smooth, innocently ageless fat cheeks as if she had never learnt what Lola knew, that white children don't kiss their old Lola.

You know who's here? And she's hungry, hungry—!

He took the tray and the birthday parcel carried beneath it to the living-room where she was sitting as he knew she would be, with the assurance of a movie queen in one of those old-time pictures he and his friends loved. Over the back of the sofa, the angle of a foot high-arched as a suspension bridge strapped to a scuffed, pea-green platform four inches high; the dyed sheepskin powder-puff that was the crown of a head; a presence charged in smoke and a particularly pungent perfume.

She was really very thin. The bones of her hand folded together narrow as the slats of a fan in his as he gave her a birthday kiss she turned into an embrace, rocking and laughing. Look, he said, waving the parcel, we came to see you early in the morning but you were off celebrating.

Oh Patty, how marvellous, what's inside, what is it—and her one unsteady hand went out, raking a biscuit and cheese into her mouth—Mmmm—'shoft . . . feelsh all shoft, but nice 'n big—love big presents, mmm. . . . She had shaken the parcel, lifted it to her ear to hear the tissue paper hissing inside, and now, gathering biscuit crumbs from round her lips with an energetic pale tongue-tip, she ripped open the wrapping and snatched out the dress.

Giving presents made him shy with responsibility. If you don't like it, just say so. Ma got the shop to promise you can take it back and get something else.

But I'm mad for it! She held the skirt against her plum velvet pants, which had given away from the fly zip, and been cobbled together with pink thread. It's divine! Aren't you crazy about it, Patrick?

If this was an act, she had the gift, the

seduction, of drawing others into her fantasies. In lieu of her fat friend, he was wagging his head and laughing with her.

She took a pull at the cigarette she balanced on the table edge, shovelled more sugar into her tea and took a gulp with the spoon still upright in the cup. I can't stand these stuffy old pants. They're really for winter but I've been out of bread to get myself summer things. I'm going to put it on. I'm-not-going-to-wait-a-second.

And as she spoke she was sitting on the sofa arm prising off the shoes, heel to toe, sending them rolling over like dislodged stones, she was struggling with the pants' faulty zipper with the oblivious concentration of a little chimpanzee catching fleas in its crotch. Her feet, bare, flat on the carpet, became stubby. Pressing her thighs together to get the pants down over her body without splitting the repair, she shed them by hopping on one foot, then the other. She was naked underneath. He saw when the pale brown pubic hair appeared in the v of the open fly being pulled down past it. Lifting her arms and crossing each hand to the opposite shoulder so that her forearms momentarily hid her face, she pulled off her T shirt as roughly, dragging up with it two brown, darker-centred circles that sprang helplessly back into place again. She was naked. The curtains at the big window were open and anyone could walk past. Even from the garden—it was the day the gardener came (Thursdays) and he could easily walk past with the woollen cap he wore winter and summer, his pipe doffed in greeting.

The boy thought immediately of that window. And the living-room door. Anyone could walk in; Lola, poor old Lola, for the tea-tray. Naked; and for the moment all this presented itself as, to him, was the stark clear window and the half-ajar door. He wanted to get up and pull the curtains but her presence itself stopped him: how she would burst out laughing, in the innocence of her nakedness, how she used to take him into the cupboard where the camping equipment was kept, holding his hand, whispering loudly straight into his face, Let's play touch wees. Hay? Shall we? —Scared?

Naked, she stood unfastening the small buttons and loops at the back of the dress's smock-blouse with care and concentration

that, along with the occasion of putting on the dress for the first time, would never be repeated. Her legs were very lightly freckled on the calves and hairless; legs looked quite different when seen in relation to the body without clothes—even the smallest bikini broke the flesh's coherence.

He had never seen a naked woman before.

HE HAD DONE IT with a girl—once—twice if you counted that time in the back of the combi with the other chaps, but both times were in the dark. And photographs were not the same, not the same at all. He could see that. Long ago they must have seen their mother, but although he might have been able to remember the feel and the smell, there was nothing visual; the mother must have read in some book exactly how young a boy-child should be removed from visual Oedipal stimulation.

He was looking at the body intently as she was intently occupied with the buttons. Although he was looking at her body he was as removed from any communication with her, Maxine, as she from him, Patrick. The thighs were what would be expected, round and yet set out at that female open-angle from the soft hair that they had pressed (while a woman sits down, he supposed, legs crossed) into a sort of quiff over where the real cleft must be. But above this base a woman has—like a paperweight you can't topple, full and cumulus-heavy and sheltering from all angles, combining, even in a thin girl, the two bottom-scallops and volume of thighs—there was not what he thought there would be. The skin between hip-bones and up to the belly-button was colourless and drab, marked by wavering, shiny breaks in the tissue that looked almost blistered.

There was a blue bruise on one hip, and the sallow gooseflesh of the backside bore a long memory, at different distances of weeks? days?, of other affronts, some yellow, nearly forgotten by the healed tissue, others dark, contused, preoccupying the membranes with broken blood-vessels. The busily jerking shoulder-blades were faintly pitted here and there, the tattoo of acne or some other voracious attacker whose harm could never be made good. The diaphragm sucked in and out between ribs stretched like bony

fingers under a pale kid glove; there were almost no breasts, the breasts were shrunk almost to the diameter of their big round, dark-pimpled aureoles, centred with maroon-brown nipples, pupils staring back at him—well? Well?

And she looked up now—she had finished with the buttons—and he had nothing to say. Her eyes in the painted face, the pretty, nineteen-year-old face that existed still beneath the daub she drew over it, looked at him and the two grotesque eyes of her body stared at him, all at once. He saw the puncture marks on her pale inner arms and he saw at last, slowly and lingeringly, the doctor's seams that cobbled her wrists as she had cobbled her velvet pants.

She met him calmly, without bravado but without apology, as if that other pair of blackened, battered, burnt-out eyes belonged to one of those friends of hers everyone thought bad company but with whom she stood, and stood by, in disaster. She had no shame for what she had done to herself; just

as because she was so afraid, so afraid, she lived as others would find it too dangerous to live.

In the movements of a few seconds the nakedness was gone. It no longer existed. The cotton skirt and smock took its place with all the mysterious authority that, he understood now, clothing had. The curly brazen head that had been decapitated by the statement of nakedness was set back on its familiar pedestal.

What he had seen for the first time was woman's nakedness, all stages of change and deterioration, of abuse and attrition by pain, loving and unloving use, he would be seeing as he lived and knew women. What he was feeling was deep distasteful awe at the knowledge of their beauty, and its decay.

When Maxine had gone he ran quickly up to his room and watched her from the window, his cousin, a girl in a cotton dress going along the road, and he thought: perhaps I'm seeing her for the last time.

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The Uninvited

What are all these uninvited guests doing
Swarming through my life, up my stairs
Telling me how badly I have done things
Using my stores, pushing away my furniture and carrying
Boxes they shoulder into the middle of my rooms, unpacking
Immovable objects so I cannot get through doors?
Here they stand at every corner with lists of things to blame me with
Appearing in the street and stopping me from getting to work where others
Blame me for that. I weep in corners, oppressed.

The early morning is cold and wet and depressing.
I hardly dare move my timorous limbs for dread
I will bring some fresh disdain.
I listen to the rain
And as each real minute seeps in with it, someone says:
"They have all gone. The day is yours again."
I look around and it is so, and the voice is mine.
I wake, glad to be so, glad even of rain and cold
And work and dirt and gloom.
I am ready to praise anything, for oh Heaven,
That terrible gang has gone.

Jenny Joseph

Alasdair MacIntyre

How Virtues Become Vices

Medicine & Society

I BEGIN with three distinct groups of problems, each so urgent that the medical conscience ought to be—and indeed clearly is—haunted by them—and not only the medical conscience. Consider first such problems as: Ought abortion to be legal? Is it ever morally right? Ought those in extremes of pain to have the right to take their own lives? Ought physicians to have the right to take the lives of patients with terminal cancer, who are in extreme pain?

Or consider, secondly, such other problems as: Should a physician be obliged to tell a patient that he is dying? Should a physician be obliged to give a patient a true diagnosis of his condition? Should a hospital be obliged to publish each year the percentage of operations in which after an organ was removed it was found to be undiseased and undamaged?

Or consider, thirdly, such rather different problems as: What is the justification for paying such high salaries to American physicians and surgeons as compared with the salaries of their counterparts in certain other countries—when, in infantile mortality rates and the life expectancy of a man aged 45, the United States lags substantially behind those countries? Ought the supply of medical care to be surrendered to the demands of a free market economy? Ought the sole criterion for the availability of medical care to be need? How should resources be allocated between different needs?

The first set of problems concerns the relationship of medical practice to the good of preserving human life. The second concerns the relationship of that practice to the goods of trust and truth-

fulness. The third concerns the relationship of medical practice to the good of justice. Each group of problems is notoriously a matter for contemporary moral debate. I am going to argue that we have no rational method available for reaching a conclusion in these questions and that this springs from the peculiar character of moral debate in our liberal, secular, pluralist culture, rather than from the special character of these problems or from the general character of moral argument.

ONE WAY TO APPROACH this thesis is to set out examples of opposing arguments on one out of each group of issues:

1(a). *I cannot will that my mother should have had an abortion when she was pregnant with me, except perhaps if it had been certain that the embryo was dead or gravely damaged. But if I cannot will this in my own case, how can I consistently deny to others the right to life that I claim for myself? I would break the so-called Golden Rule, unless I denied that a mother had in general a right to an abortion.*

1(b). *Everybody has certain rights over his or her own body. To establish such rights we need merely to show that it cannot be shown that anyone else has a right to interfere with the implementation of our own desires about our bodies. It follows that at the stage when the embryo is essentially part of the mother's body, the mother has a right to make her own uncoerced decision on whether she will have an abortion or not. Since she had a moral right, she ought also to have a legal right.*

2(a). *A physician should decide whether to tell a patient who is gravely ill or dying the truth about his or her condition by reckoning on the consequences in that particular case to that particular patient of giving or withholding that specific information. If the patient's health and happiness will be increased by telling the truth, then the truth should be told; but if not, not so.*

2(b). *To treat an agent with moral respect is to look to his dignity and not his happiness. To deprive*

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a man of the truth about his disease or his death is to deprive him of dignity. More particularly every man can only respect himself if he faces up to the fact of his own death. Hence to deprive patients of the truth about themselves is to do them a wrong, and a wrong that insults their status as human beings.

3(a). *Justice demands that every citizen should have so far as is possible an equal chance to develop his talents and his other potentialities. But good health is a prerequisite for such development. Therefore every citizen should have an equal right to access to the means of good health, so far as it is available. Therefore justice requires a free national health service, financed out of taxation, with no private sector of medical practice.*

3(b). *Everybody has a right to incur only such obligations as he chooses, to be free to make such contracts as he wishes. Every doctor, therefore, must be free to accept patients or not and to practice on what terms he chooses. If others then do not wish to deal with him, that is their free choice. Freedom requires freedom of contract. Freedom of contract requires medicine to be a matter of private practice.*

ABOUT THESE SIX ARGUMENTS I want to make two main points. The first is that the goods which each argument aspires to vindicate are incommensurable with the goods invoked by at least some of the other arguments. Each of the arguments moves validly from premises to conclusion. But the premises are so independent of each other that those who accept the premises of rival arguments share no common moral ground. Given each set of premises, it is rational to move to each conclusion; but there is no argument available, no criterion available, no rational procedure to decide between rival and incompatible conclusions.

We appear, therefore, to have to make a *non-rational choice* between alternative positions, so far as our own moral judgments upon each issue are concerned, and to have to resort to *non-rational persuasion* if we are to affect the choices made by others.

What puts us in this position?

One standard type of answer is that it springs from the nature of morality as such. C. L. Stevenson's position in *Ethics and Language* (1944) requires that moral disagreement be rationally interminable. Jean-Paul Sartre's moral philosophy—at least in one version—notoriously makes an arbitrary choice the fulcrum upon which moral judgment depends. If they (and those who think with them on this matter) are correct, then the place of arbitrary choice and of interminable disagreement in morals will be the same irrespective of time and place, irrespective of the differ-

ces between different social and cultural orders. But is this true?

As a preliminary to raising and trying to answer this question, it is important to glance at the historical background to the present situation.

WE OUGHT FIRST TO NOTE that the historical provenance of the six arguments which I outlined is very various. So far as their philosophical ancestry is concerned, the first has its roots immediately in Kantian thought and, more remotely, in Christianity; the second in the thought of Jefferson, Robespierre, and Rousseau; the third in Benthamite utilitarianism; the fourth in Hegel and Kant; the fifth in T. H. Green and in Rousseau; the sixth in Adam Smith and John Locke. But of course the premises of the six arguments have a genealogy which extends beyond explicitly philosophical texts, indeed far beyond any texts.

For some of these premises at least have informed a variety of types of social and moral practice and as such have defined in part cultures which are our moral and intellectual ancestors. But then they were parts of wholes, ordered within some total moral scheme which provided a vision of man's true end, of the relation of his empirical nature to his essential nature. It is a tacit assumption of secular, liberal, pluralist culture, of the culture of modernity, that to a rational man no such vision is now available, because we can have no rationally defensible concept of man's true end or of an essential human nature.

Consequently, what we inherit from the varied and different strands of our past is a collection of fragments, of moral premises detached from the contexts in which they were once intelligibly at home, survivals now available for independent moral assertion from a variety of moral points of view. It is this that makes moral argument appear to consist merely of the clash of bare assertion and counter-assertion marked by what is only the appearance of argument—so that non-rational persuasion seems to be the only way to terminate disagreement, and arbitrary choice seems to be the only way for an agent to resolve the issues in his own mind.

That is to say, the Stevensonian or the Sartrean conclusion expresses a genuine sociological insight into the fate of morality in modern culture, rather than a philosophical insight into the nature of morality as such. But the Stevensonian, or the Sartrean, or the Nietzschean philosophical claim about morality could only be vindicated if no thesis about essential human nature and its true end could be made good.

Does this mean that in the present historical

situation we are doomed to arbitrary non-rational solutions to moral problems, including the moral problems of the medical practice? In order to answer this question we must first enquire how the general character of the moral history of our culture has affected the special character of medical ethics.

IT MIGHT BE CLAIMED (and it often has been claimed) that the morality of the medical profession is in a special way autonomous. The medical profession has had to safeguard and to transmit its values in a variety of very different social contexts: late medieval Catholicism, Renaissance Italy, Eighteenth-century France, Twentieth-century America. The very claim to be a *profession*, and not merely a trade, characteristically involves a claim to be the guardian of certain values.

The values to which the medical profession has specifically claimed to be committed through changing social and moral environments are at least threefold. There is the unconditional commitment to preserve life and health; the responsibility for justifying the patient's trust in his physician or surgeon; and the demand for the autonomy both of the individual physician or surgeon in making his judgments, and of the profession as a whole in sitting in judgment on its own members. The crucial question is: Could these virtues not only survive in their integrity, but provide an adequate moral criterion for medical practice in a culture with a history of moral fragmentation such as ours?

At first sight it might seem at least not impossible that this should be so. For certain virtues incarnate certain goods, and their rational hold upon mankind seems to be independent of cultural history and variation. In order to understand why this can be so, I must give a more general account of the virtues.

SOCIETIES DIFFER in their accounts of the virtues. There are not only differences as to which human qualities are to be accounted virtues; but there are, of course, also differences as to the criteria by means of which the virtues are to be justified. Fifth-century Athens is in many ways at odds with twelfth-century Iceland; Polynesia is radically different from Pennsylvania. But it is a condition of our ability to point out this truth—so often one of the premises from which a facile relativism is deduced—that we are able to identify in each of these societies one and the same focus upon a set of human qualities, the presence or absence of which in a man determines how he is to be assessed as a man. Were this not so, we would not be able to understand these

various cultures as differing from each other over one and the same thing. Our perception of difference presupposes a perception of resemblance.

What, then, makes a virtue a virtue? We define, and we cannot but define, our relationships to other people by referring to certain goods. *A*, *B*, *C*, and *D* are friends. *D* dies in obscure circumstances; *A* discovers how *D* died and tells the truth about it to *B*, while lying to *C*. *C* discovers the lie. What *A* cannot then intelligibly claim is that he stands in the same relationship of friendship to both *B* and *C*. By telling the truth to one and lying to the other he has partially defined a difference in the relationship. Of course it is open to *A* to explain this difference in a number of ways. Perhaps he was trying to spare *C* pain, or perhaps he was ashamed to reveal the nature of his enquiries about *D* to *C*, or perhaps he is simply cheating *C*. But some difference in the relationship now exists as a result of the lie.

Just as we define our relationships to each other, whether we will it or not, by reference to standards of truthfulness and trust, so we define them too by reference to standards of justice and of courage. If *A*, a professor, gives *B* and *C* the grades that their papers deserve, but grades *D* because he is attracted by *D*'s blue eyes or is repelled by *D*'s dandruff, then he has defined his relationship to *D* differently from his relationship to the other members of the class, whether he wishes it or not.

Justice requires that we treat others in respect of merit or desert according to uniform and impersonal standards. To depart from the standards of justice in some particular instance defines our relationship with the relevant person as in some way special or distinctive.

THE CASE WITH COURAGE is a little different. We hold courage to be a virtue because the care and concern for individuals, communities, and causes that we feel require the existence of such a virtue. If *A* says that he cares for some individual, community, or cause, but is unwilling to risk harm or danger on his, her, or its own behalf, he puts in question the genuineness of his care and concern. Courage—the capacity to risk harm or danger to oneself—has its role in human life because of this connection with care and concern. This is not to say that a man cannot genuinely care and also be a coward. It is in part to say that a man who genuinely cares and has not the capacity for risking harm or danger has to define himself, both to himself and to others, as a coward.

I TAKE IT, THEN, that truthfulness, justice, and courage—and perhaps some others—are human goods in the light of which we have to

characterise ourselves (and others), whatever our private moral standpoint or our society's particular codes may be. This recognition that we cannot escape the definition of our relationships in terms of such goods is perfectly compatible with the acknowledgement that different societies have different codes of truthfulness, justice, and courage.

Lutheran pietists brought up their children to believe that one ought to tell the truth to everybody at all times, whatever the circumstances or consequences; and Kant was one of their children. Traditional Bantu parents brought up their children not to tell the truth to unknown strangers, since they believed that this could render the family vulnerable to witchcraft. In our culture many of us have been brought up not to tell the truth to elderly great-aunts who invite us to admire their new hats. But each of these codes embodies an acknowledgement of the good of truthfulness. So it is also with varying codes of justice and of courage.

The inescapable character of such goods is a matter of the role in human life of the qualities that embody them; the virtues of being honest, just, and courageous. A society that does not recognise these as virtues would necessarily lack the general features of human society. When we do find a culture, such as that of the Ik,¹ where this recognition is absent we find something akin to a Hobbesian state of nature, not to a human society. This empirical confirmation of my thesis is strengthened by the discovery that the Ik once had genuine social bonds—and with them a recognition of the virtues—but lost these. To characterise this disaster by saying that the Ik lost *both* their social bonds *and* their recognition of the central virtues would be a mistake; for it would ignore the fact that to speak of the virtues *is* to speak of certain key forms of social relationship. Virtues are parts of social structure, and moral philosophy and sociology ought not to be conceived of as distant disciplines.

A CERTAIN TENSION EXISTS between the moral history of our own culture as I understood it in the first section of this paper and the account of the virtues which I have just given. The first account emphasised *cultural variability* and *fragmentation*. The second has emphasised *the irreducible moral context of culture*. It may help to avoid the appearance of incompatibility if I immediately underline one point that I have already made and add to it another.

The point already made is that the central

invariant virtues are embodied in very different codes in different cultures, and a shared recognition of these virtues is compatible with wide-ranging disputes about codes. The second and additional point is that the central invariant virtues are never *by themselves* adequate to constitute a morality. To constitute a morality adequate to guide a human life we need a scheme of the virtues which depends in part on further beliefs, beliefs about the true nature of man and his true end. But about these matters cultures have, of course, varied and disagreed.

To understand how this is so, consider those qualities which have been considered virtues in some times and places and not in others. Thrift, humility, charity, authenticity, and friendship are cases in point. To understand these qualities as virtues requires an appeal to certain beliefs which have flourished in some human cultures and not in others. If we believe in the so-called Protestant work-ethic—work, save, invest (as practised by Venetian Catholics and Spanish Jews as well as by German, English, and American Protestants, *pace* Max Weber)—the presence or absence of thrift will be a crucial fact about individuals. If we accept that certain forms of marriage and virginity are the will of God, then chastity will become an important quality. It is only against the background of such over-all interpretations of human existence that such qualities appear to be or not to be virtues.

IN CHARACTERISTIC HUMAN CULTURES, therefore, the standard list of the virtues will include some items which derive their status from the part they play in all human life. It will also include other items which derive their status from some more particular set of beliefs or forms of understanding, which is restricted to some (perhaps to only one) form of culture and social order. What gives each moral vision its uniqueness and its integrity is not just a question of what items are included in its particular list of the virtues, but also of what criterion is invoked to justify the selection of just those items rather than others. So ancient Greek moral thought and practice is pervaded by the notion of human beings as having a distinctive nature, specified in terms of that “work” (*εργον*) and that “end” (*τελος*) which distinguish human beings from gods, geese, or granite. So the moral vision of the Renaissance man of action centres on the notion of *virtu*, a certain conception of human strength and energy. So the Puritans of the 16th and 17th centuries gave an interpretation to the notion of a divinely ordained vocation which made both hard work and thrift virtues.

Such a criterion will determine not only which items are included in the list of the virtues, but

¹ Colin Turnbull, *The Mountain People* (1973).

also how they are ranked in importance. Courage is accounted a virtue in almost all societies; but it has a very different place in the heroic societies whose life is reflected in the *Iliad* (or in the Icelandic sagas) from its place in any Christian scheme.

THE TRADITIONAL MEDICAL VIRTUES are clearly not to be derived in any simple way from the invariant human virtues. To count them as virtues we need to appeal to certain special beliefs about the specific kind of value we place on the preservation of human life, about the special character of the physician-patient relationship, and about professional autonomy. The difficulty about the traditional medical virtues is two-fold: they have become problematic, and they have become problematic in a culture which precisely lacks the means to solve moral problems. I have already indicated why I hold the latter thesis to be correct. Let me therefore turn to the former.

I want to argue that just as the traditional medical virtues had a special status, so those virtues have become problematic in a special way. There is a social process by which what have been virtues in one social and cultural context can become vices in another. I am not here referring to the process which I have already noted whereby what are *believed* to be virtues in one social order come to be *thought* to be vices in another (as the quality which Aristotle counted as a virtue under the name of *magnanimity* came to be considered by the early Christians the vice that is the counterpart to their virtue of humility). I am referring to a process whereby what actually were virtues turn into what actually are vices.

Before I turn to the history of the traditional medical virtues, let me list a number of ways in which this may happen.

THE FIRST IS THE CASE where a disposition valuable for its own sake and valued for its own sake, as any genuine virtue must be (it may, of course, also be valued for further ends that it serves) comes to be valued only or primarily for its employment as part of a technique. Sometimes, for example, social workers are taught to become "friends" with their clients in order to gain their confidence so as to manipulate them more effectively. Now it is of the essence of friendship as a virtue that one cannot become a friend from such a motive and with such an intention. What the social worker is being taught is to do and to speak as a friend would do and speak, but in such a way that what is produced is a counterfeit version and not authentic friendship. It is because

the social worker's version is a counterfeit of the virtue, and one calculated to deceive the innocent, that it is a vice and not merely a neutral quality.

Aristotle, in his discussion of courage, distinguishes *true* courage from *military* courage. Military courage is certainly not a vice, but because it is acquired and exercised as part of the technical training of a soldier it is not to be confused with a virtue which always belongs to a man *qua* man and not *qua* social worker, soldier, or possessor of some other set of technical skills.

A SECOND WAY in which a virtue may become a vice is when a change in the nature of the effects of a certain type of action transforms the character of that type of action. The giving of systematic poor relief to wage-labourers in England in the early seventeenth century, as a system institutionalised by a Poor Law and controlled by the local Board of Guardians, first had the effect of keeping wages low. If the parish paid a near-subsistence minimum, the farmer could pay his labourers less than he would otherwise have had to. This became a means to this end, so that the actions involved in poor relief were now informed by the intention of providing a stock of cheap wage labour. An unintended but very general effect led the action of assisting the poor to be transformed into the action of contriving their maximal exploitation. A virtue become a vice.

A third way in which a virtue may become a vice is when a quality valued for its own sake is made available for sale. Alexander Gerschenkron has described how in the initial stages of modernisation (and especially in the 18th century) a new type of entrepreneur emerged whose transactions were based on much larger quantities of fixed and variable capital than previously and whose enterprises were essentially long-term. Unlike his mercantile predecessors, he found himself having recurrent transactions with the same customers, debtors, and creditors. Up to this point the rule *Caveat emptor* had tended to dominate commercial transactions. The entrepreneur did not need to convince those who were buying from him that he was reliable, if he would probably never trade with them again. The new entrepreneur, however, had to acquire a reputation for honesty; and to acquire it he had to do, by and large, what honest men do. Would it therefore be true to say that entrepreneurs became honest? The answer, as Kant saw clearly, is "No", and not only because "honesty" became part of the technical skill of the entrepreneur. It is because what is exchanged for money, and valued in so far as it can be exchanged for money; cannot be a virtue. It follows (as the young Marx of the 1844 manuscripts saw clearly) that free-

market capitalism has a striking, increasing tendency to destroy the virtues and a progressive tendency. It is not just that money is bad for us; it is also the case, that "marijuana is not addictive . . . money is."

Fourthly, a virtue may become a vice—or simply a non-moral quality—by a change in its relationship to a role which it partially defines. In traditional, patriarchal societies reciprocal loyalty between superiors and inferiors is central to the social bonds. To value loyalty as a virtue is to value just those bonds. But when the virtue of loyalty is invoked in modern corporate organisations it is characteristically part of an attempt to undermine the impersonal, bureaucratic standards of such organisations and to substitute adherence to persons for adherence to rules. Such adherence may be a good or bad thing, depending on the circumstances and the nature of the relevant persons and rules; but it is certainly not a virtue as such.

WE HAVE, THEN, at least four types of case in which virtues can become vices, or if not vices, at least problematic qualities: the type of case where what was a virtue is transformed into part of a set of technical skills; where a change in the effects of the practice of a virtue transforms in time the intentions with which it is practised; where what was a virtue becomes a marketable commodity; and where a change in the structure of roles changes the character of the human qualities involved in the role-playing.

I NOW WANT TO CONSIDER if, and how far, the traditional medical virtues have turned to vices. I want to begin by considering three social presuppositions of the practice of the traditional medical virtues.

The first is technological. The practice of medicine has, for most of its history, been carried on in societies where human life is immensely fragile and vulnerable and where the technical means to safeguard it have been very limited. High infantile mortality-rates, low expectations of life for surviving adults, extremely limited predictive powers in framing prognoses—all underlie the ordering of medical priorities embodied in different versions of the Hippocratic Oath. Medicine would have been a quite different form of social practice if life was only to be preserved if health could be restored, *or* life was only to be preserved if grave pain and suffering were to be avoided, *or* health was to be restored only if in so doing pain and suffering were not to be increased. That ordering of medical priorities which places a supreme value on life is made more intelligible by considering the social

background in which it was founded.

A second presupposition of the practice of the traditional medical virtues was the existence of a shared and socially established morality. The physician could assume that the patients' attitudes towards life and death would be roughly the same as his own, and *vice versa*. Hence the patient in putting himself or herself into the hands of his or her physician could feel that he or she was not relinquishing his or her moral autonomy.

A third presupposition of the practice of the traditional medical virtues was that the activities of the physician or surgeon took place within a given social order, but were not themselves able to shape or be responsible for shaping that order. Medicine could not be understood in its traditional perspective as a social practice competing with other social practices for scarce resources and offering debatable criteria for their distribution.

None of these presuppositions is now warranted, and it is modern social change that has destroyed this warranty. Technological change has made of the preservation of human life a very different issue. Moral change has made of the trust which the patient ought to express in the physician a very different issue. Changes in the scale and the cost of medical care as well as political and economic change in society at large have made the distribution of medical care into a very different issue. In each case what was a virtue has become at best problematic, at worst a vice. Consider once more the ways in which virtues become vices.

THERE IS, FIRST, THE CASE where the effects of a practice change so that the character of the relevant actions change. This is what happened to the medical practice of making the preservation of human life an over-riding goal. Here there are two kinds of change. It is now the case (as it used not to be) that this goal involves the systematic preservation of the old long after they can function as genuine human beings. It is now the case (as it used not to be) that this goal involves systematically increasing the proportion of hopelessly crippled infants and helplessly decaying old people to healthy adults and children. Any agent who knowingly participates in producing such effects systematically, as many physicians do, does great harm and wrong. What was a virtue has become a vice, but not an unproblematic vice. For the physician now finds himself in a tragic dilemma. Consider the case of recently born crippled infants where heroic efforts may preserve *either* a needless bundle of distorted and suffering nerves and tissues, *or* —sometimes against all probable calculation— a human child, physically imperfect but with real

potential, perhaps even a Helen Keller.² Any rule which relieves the physician of the burden of extending suffering uselessly imposes on him the burden of taking innocent life wantonly. And no rule would be worst of all.

What has happened to place physicians in this dilemma is the result of the coincidence of two distinct histories of moral change. In the society at large our fragmented inheritance has resulted in abandoning us to a secular, liberal pluralism which leaves us resourceless in the face of moral problems. In the history of medical practice a change in its presuppositions has rendered what was virtuous vicious, and what was unproblematic problematic. Thus, parts of medical practice became morally problematic precisely at a time when we have minimal resources for the solution of moral problems.

As with the first of the three traditional medical values, so also with the other two. The trust which defines the relationship of patient to physician was based upon the presupposition of a shared, established morality. The physician could have a reasonable assurance that his patients' beliefs about suffering, death and human dignity were much the same as his own. The patient could have a reasonable assurance that his beliefs would be respected. But in a liberal, pluralist morality the patient knows, not only that the traditional basis for this assurance is now missing, but that the physician has no special resources for the solution of the moral problems which arise in the course of a relationship to a patient. The parent of a helplessly ill child, or a helplessly old person, cannot know that the physician wills their good, because they cannot know what his conception of good is. Once again the physician is in a tragic dilemma. The invitation to trust which was once a sign of virtue becomes a sign of something else. The change in the structure of role-playing has changed the quality of the actions. A virtue has in a characteristic way become a vice.

But the physician has no easy way out. The whole nature of medical care is almost unimaginable without a context of mutual trust. To simply abandon that mutual trust, because it is no longer warranted, would be destructive; to try to maintain in its traditional forms is equally dangerous.

² I consider the case of infants rather than of the old, because the collapse of the extended family has left most of us with a deep inability even to approach the problems of the old, an inability institutionalised in the way we, as a society as well as individuals, treat them.

It is, of course, in this situation that market relations become significantly obtrusive in medical practice. Differential treatment is offered for differential reward; access to medical care is radically unequal. Here again the physician is, like everyone else, in a situation which he cannot escape. The demands of social justice and the demands of the physician for autonomy are in radical conflict. If members of the medical profession choose certain forms of specialisation in research or in practice, they thereby determine the availability of certain patterns of medical care. If freedom of physicians is safeguarded, equal rights of citizens will be flouted. So the autonomy of the medical profession can become a social vice, while the freedom of the physician remains an important value. Once again we have a dilemma which is almost intolerable.

HEGEL SPOKE OF TRAGEDY as "the conflict of right with right." What makes any protagonist's situation tragic is that he inevitably has to choose between wrong and wrong. It is with this in mind that I have spoken of the physician's moral dilemmas as tragic. The moral resources of his culture—of our own culture—offer no solution for him. What matters most in a period in which human life is tragic is to have the strength to resist false solutions. The characteristic temptation of the modern world is utilitarianism. For utilitarianism in all its versions aspires to provide a criterion, a way of judging between rival and conflicting goods to maximise utility. But the goods and the rights which define our contemporary conflicts are incommensurable. There is no higher criterion. There is no neutral concept of utility.

The medical profession ought not, therefore, to look for solutions to philosophical theorising. What philosophy has to tell them is precisely why they cannot hope for solutions. For a philosopher to try to go beyond this would be for him to misunderstand either the present situation or the scope and limits of his discipline. A philosopher offering positive moral advice in this situation would be a comic character introduced into a tragedy. Imagine Socrates introducing himself with advice for Antigone or Creon—or Plato trying to counsel Philoctetes, Neoptolemus, and Odysseus. Yet to understand even this is perhaps to transform the perspective in which the moral problems of medicine are viewed; and such a transformation can only be effected by philosophy.

Marx/Engels and Racism

By W. H. Chaloner & W. O. Henderson



WHILE SCHOLARS on the Continent have long been aware of the fact that Karl Marx held anti-Semitic views, the same cannot generally be said of their colleagues in England and America.

Marx was a Jew; and when he was growing up in Trier the Jews, though not perse-

cuted, were treated as second-class citizens and excluded from certain professions. No Jew could hold a commission in the Prussian army or practise as a lawyer at the bar. To continue as a member of the legal profession Marx's father became a Christian and was baptised by a Lutheran army chaplain. As a boy Marx realised that he was different from his fellows. He had been baptised, but he was "a Jew by race" and suffered from the anti-Semitism prevalent in Germany in his day. His reaction to the situation was an extraordinary one. He ranged himself with the anti-Semites and denounced his own people in a most violent fashion.¹

His attitude towards the Jews was made clear in two articles which he wrote in 1843 at the age of 25. They were reviews of a book and an article by Bruno Bauer on the Jewish question, and they appeared in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (published in Paris in 1844).² Marx regarded capitalism, as operated by the middle classes, as inherently evil; and he argued that Jewish money-making activities lay at the very heart of the obnoxious capitalist system. The following extracts from Marx's articles indicate his point of view of the Jewish question in his day.

"What is the worldly *raison d'être* of Jewry [Judaism]? The practical necessity of Jewry is self-interest."

"What is the worldly religion of the Jews? It is the petty haggling of the hawker."

"What is his worldly God?" "It is money."

"So in Jewry we recognise a contemporary universal anti-social phenomenon, which has reached its present pitch through a process of historical development in which the Jews have zealously co-operated. And this evil anti-social aspect of Jewry has grown to a stage at which it must necessarily collapse."

"The Jews have emancipated themselves in a Jewish fashion. Not only have they mastered the power of money but—with or without the Jews—money has become a world power. The Jews have emancipated themselves by turning Christians into Jews."

"Money is the most zealous God of Israel and no other God can compete with him. Money debases all human Gods and turns them into goods. Money is the universal value of everything."

"The God of the Jews has become secularised and has become a World God. The bill of exchange is the real God of the Jews."

"Jewry reaches its climax in the consummation of bourgeois society—and bourgeois society has reached its highest point in the Christian world."

In 1845, in *The Holy Family*, Marx claimed that in his articles in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* he had "proved that the task of abolishing the essence of Jewry is in truth the task of abolishing Jewry in civil society, abolishing the inhumanity of today's practice of life, the summit of which is the money system."³ In 1849 an article in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (of which Marx was the editor) criticised the notion that Jews living in Prussia's Polish provinces should be regarded as Germans. The article declared that these Jews were "the filthiest of all races." "Neither by speech nor by descent—but only by their greed for profit—can they be looked upon as relatives of the Germans in Frankfurt." One of Marx's critical biographers has remarked: "this solution of the Jewish question was not very different from Adolf Hitler's, for it involved the liquidation of Judaism. . . ."⁴

THERE ARE NUMEROUS uncomplimentary references to Jews in Karl Marx's letters to his close

friend Friedrich Engels in the 1850s and 1860s. At that time Marx was living in London and his earnings as a free-lance journalist—he was a regular contributor to the *New York Daily Tribune*—were quite insufficient for his needs. Engels, then employed as a clerk by the firm of Ermen & Engels in Manchester, sent him small remittances whenever he could. Even so Marx failed to make ends meet and—when there was nothing more to pledge at the pawnbrokers—he borrowed money from anyone who would lend it. He had many dealings with Jewish financial agents in the City of London. The Bambergers (father and son),⁵ as well as Stiefel and Spielmann, were German Jews whose names frequently crop up in the Marx-Engels correspondence. Marx made use of the Jews to raise small loans and to discount bills of exchange received from Charles A. Dana (editor of the *New York Tribune*) in advance payment of articles which Marx had agreed to write. Marx complained bitterly that the Jews would not discount his bills until confirmation from Dana had been received;⁶ and he was furious when they pressed him to honour debts due for repayment. Marx showed his contempt by always referring to them as “Jew [or “little Jew”] Bamberger” and “Jew Spielmann”, or by imitating the nasal twang characteristic of the way in which some Jews from

Eastern Europe spoke German.⁷ Yet Marx had cause to regret the day when the Bambergers were not in business in London any more and were no longer available to discount his bills of exchange. In 1859 he wrote to Engels: “it is the devil of a nuisance that I have no Bamberger in London any more. . . .”⁸

MARX’S ANTI-SEMITISM may be illustrated by examining his attitude towards Ferdinand Lassalle, who was a Jew from Breslau in Silesia. As a young man Lassalle had led the workers of Düsseldorf during the revolution of 1848. But he had never been a member of the Communist League, since his application to join

the Cologne branch had been turned down; and he had taken no part in the risings in Germany in 1849 in support of the Frankfurt constitution, since he had been in jail at that time. Consequently in the 1850s, while nearly all the former supporters of the revolution were either in prison or in exile, Lassalle was able to live in Düsseldorf, without being unduly molested by the authorities. It was to Marx’s advantage to keep in touch with Lassalle, who gave him news of the underground workers’ movement in the Rhineland. And through his aristocratic connections—he was a close friend of the Countess of Hatzfeld—he was

sometimes able to provide Marx with useful political information which he could use in articles contributed to the *New York Tribune* and *Die Presse*. But while Marx regarded himself as the head of a great political movement who should be obeyed by his followers, Lassalle declined to be a mere disciple and was determined to be a leader of the German workers in his own right.

The correspondence between Marx and Lassalle⁹ suggests that the two men were colleagues who—despite certain differences of opinion—were collaborating to achieve a common aim. But the letters exchanged between Marx and Engels tell a very different story. Here Marx showed his contempt for the Jew who presumed

to have opinions and ambitions of his own. When Lassalle was Marx’s guest in London in 1862 Marx wrote to Engels:

“It is now perfectly clear to me that, as the shape of his head and the growth of his hair indicate, he is descended from the negroes who joined in the flight of Moses from Egypt (unless his mother or grandmother on the father’s side was crossed with a nigger). Now this union of Jewishness to Germanness on a negro basis was bound to produce an extraordinary hybrid. The importunity of the fellow is also niggerlike.”¹⁰

Marx referred to his guest as a “Jewish nigger” who was “completely deranged.” He frequently used derogatory epithets when writing about Lassalle, such as “Itzig” (Ikey), “Ephraim



CARICATURE OF KARL KAUTSKY AND EDUARD BERNSTEIN DRAWN BY KAUTSKY, 1884, ON A BIRTHDAY CARD SENT TO ENGELS.

Gescheit" and "Judel Braun." And Marx's wife, in a letter to Engels, called Lassalle "the little Berlin Jew."¹¹

AFTER LASSALLE'S DEATH in 1864 there are fewer uncomplimentary remarks about Jews in the Marx-Engels correspondence than before. In that year Engels became a partner in the firm of Ermen & Engels, and from 1867 onwards he paid Marx an annual allowance of £350. So, although Marx's financial problems were by no means solved, he had less need than formerly to try to borrow money from Jews—such as Ignaz Horn¹² and Leo Frankel.¹³ He wrote to Engels in 1875 that he had got into conversation with "a sly-looking Yid" on a journey from London to Rotterdam. He was clearly delighted to be able to report that his loquacious Jewish travelling companion had been the victim of some sharp practice in a business deal.¹⁴ And in his old age, when on holiday in Ramsgate, Marx declared that there were "many Jews and fleas" at the resort.¹⁵

IT WAS NOT ONLY in private letters to his closest friend that Marx indulged in anti-Semitic outbursts. In an article in the *New York Tribune* (4 January 1856), in which he discussed an international loan to be raised by the Russian government to finance the war in the Crimea, Marx savagely attacked the Jewish financiers who cooperated to place the loan.¹⁶ Marx wrote:

"This loan is brought out under the auspices of the house of Stieglitz at St Petersburg. Stieglitz is to Alexander what Rothschild is to Francis Joseph, what Fould is to Louis Napoleon. The late Czar Nicholas made Stieglitz a Russian baron, as the late Kaiser Franz made old Rothschild an Austrian baron, while Louis Napoleon has made a cabinet minister of Fould, with a free ticket to the Tuileries for the females of his family. Thus we find every tyrant backed by a Jew, as is every Pope by a Jesuit. In truth, the cravings of oppressors would be hopeless, and the practicability of war out of the question, if there were not an army of Jesuits to smother thought and a handful of Jews to ransack pockets."

Hope & Co. of Amsterdam played an important role in placing the Russian loan. This was not a Jewish firm, but Marx declared that

"the Hopes lend only the prestige of their name; the real work is done by Jews, and can only be done by them, as they monopolise the machinery of the loan-mongering mysteries by concentrating their energies upon the barter-trade in securities, and the changing of money and negotiating of bills in a great measure arising therefrom. Take Amsterdam, for instance, a city harbouring many of the worst descendants of the Jews whom Ferdinand and Isabella drove out of Spain, and who, after lingering a while in Portugal, were driven thence also, and eventually found a safe place of retreat in Holland. In Amsterdam alone they number not less than 35,000, many of whom are engaged in this gambling

and jobbing of securities. . . . Their business is to watch the monies available for investment and keenly observe where they lie. Here and there and everywhere that a little capital courts investment, there is ever one of these little Jews ready to make a little suggestion or place a little bit of a loan. The smartest highwayman in the Abruzzi is not better posted about the locale of the hard cash in a traveller's valise or pocket, than those Jews about any loose capital in the hands of a trader."

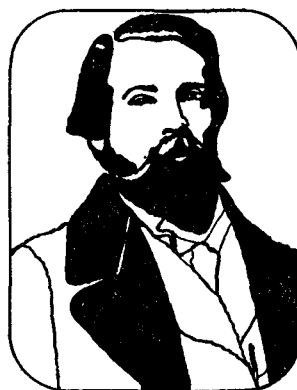
Marx went on to attack the Jewish finance houses of Königswarter, Raphael, Stern, Bischoffsheim, Rothschild, Mendelssohn, Bleichröder, Fould and many others. He declared that many of these families were linked by marriage and he observed that

"the loan-mongering Jews derive much of their strength from these family relations, as these, in addition to their lucre affinities, give a compactness and unity to their operations which ensure their success."

Marx concluded his article as follows:

"This Eastern war is destined at all events to throw some light upon this system of loan-mongering as well as other systems. Meanwhile the Czar will get his fifty millions, and let the English journals say what they please, if he wants five fifties more, the Jews will dig them up. Let us not be thought too severe upon these loan-mongering gentry. The fact that 1855 years ago Christ drove the Jewish money-changers out of the temple, and that the money-changers of our age enlisted on the side of tyranny happen again chiefly to be Jews, is perhaps no more than a historical coincidence. The loan-mongering Jews of Europe do only on a larger and more obnoxious scale what many others do on one smaller and less significant. But it is only because the Jews are so strong that it is timely and expedient to expose and stigmatise their organisation."

There was a kind of bitter justice in the fact that Marx, who detested his own race, should have suffered from the anti-Semitic views of others. There were those who attacked Marx because he was a Jew and who branded the political movement that he led as a Jewish conspiracy.^{16a}



ENGELS' ATTITUDE towards the Jews was quite different from that of Marx.¹⁷ He had never denounced the Jews as a race of petty traders and money-lenders and as Marx had done in his youthful article in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*.¹⁸ Indeed he

later declared that anti-Semitism was the mark of a backward culture and was confined to Russia, Austria and Prussia.¹⁹

In 1881 Eduard Bernstein sent Engels some examples of anti-Semitic propaganda in Germany. Engels replied that he had never seen anything so stupid or childish. He praised the *Sozial-Demokrat*—the leading socialist paper in Germany at the time of Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Law—for coming out firmly against anti-Semitism. Engels quoted with approval a passage from a letter which he had recently received from a Jewish correspondent (Carl Hirsch), who had just been to Berlin. Hirsch had written that "the official press which prints anti-Semitic articles has few readers."

"While it is true that the Germans have a natural antipathy towards the Jews, it is also a fact that the working class, the radical petty bourgeoisie, and the middle-class philistines hate the government far more than they hate the Jews."

Bernstein, however, disagreed with Hirsch and claimed that anti-Semitic propaganda was falling upon fertile soil in Germany as far as civil servants, teachers, craftsmen, and peasants were concerned.

Ten years later Engels wrote to August Bebel that he was glad to learn that new Jewish recruits were joining the German Social Democrat Party. But he warned Bebel that socialists would have to keep a watchful eye on these Jewish colleagues because they were cleverer than the average bourgeois socialist and were—owing to centuries of oppression—in the habit of pushing themselves forward!²⁰

ALTHOUGH ENGELS DISAPPROVED of anti-Semitism and welcomed Jews like Karl Kautsky and Alfred Adler as party colleagues, he did criticise particular Jews and groups of Jews. For example, in a comment on English politics in 1852 he contemptuously dismissed Disraeli as a "Jewish swindler."²¹ A few years later when he wished to express his disapproval of Lassalle's conduct, he referred to him as "a real Jew from the Slav frontier" and as "a greasy Jew disguised under brilliantine and flashy jewels."²² In 1862, in a letter to Carl Siebel, he attacked the Jewish members of a German club (the *Schiller Anstalt*) in Manchester. He declared that he seldom visited this veritable "Jerusalem Club" any more because the noisy behaviour of the Jews inconvenienced other members.

"What has happened is what always happens when Jews are about. At first they thank God that they had a Schiller Anstalt, but hardly had they got inside than they declared that it was not good enough for them and that they wanted to build a bigger club house—a true temple of Moses—to which the Schiller Anstalt could be moved. This would indeed be the quickest road to bankruptcy . . . Look out! In a year or two you will get a circular reading like this: 'In view of the bankruptcy of the late Schiller Anstalt' . . ."²³

A few years later, however, when he was President of the Schiller Anstalt, Engels played a leading part in securing the larger premises that the Jewish members desired.

In 1864, during the crisis in the Lancashire cotton industry at the time of the American Civil War, Engels complained of the vexations that he had to endure in the office of Ermen & Engels because of "Jewish chicaneries."²⁴ In October 1867, and again in May 1868, Engels complained that his time was being wasted by visits from "that damned old Jew" Leibel Choras, who was a refugee from Moldavia where the Jews were being persecuted.²⁵ Engels obviously had little sympathy for Leibel Choras. And in 1870 Engels dismissed Leo Frankel as "a real little Yid."²⁶

In 1892 in a letter to the French socialist leader Paul Lafargue—Marx's son-in-law—Engels even expressed a certain sympathy for the anti-Jewish movement in France. He wrote:

"I begin to understand French anti-Semitism when I see how many Jews of Polish origin with German names intrude themselves everywhere to the point of arousing public opinion in the *ville lumière*, of which the Parisian philistine is so proud and which he believes to be the supreme power in the universe."²⁷

Engels also expressed his contempt for the Polish Jews who were, in his view, "caricatures of Jews."²⁸ He wrote to Laura Lafargue:

Business principle of the Polish Jew to ask much so as to be able to rebate, as for instance:

"How much is a yard of this cloth?"

"15 groschen."

"He says 15, he means 12½, he would take 10, and the cloth is worth 7½. I am prepared to pay 5 so I will offer him 2½ groschen."²⁹

JUST AS ENGELS RARELY SHOWED any antipathy towards the Jews, so he had no prejudices against coloured peoples. He rejected the view commonly expressed by explorers and missionaries in his day that native peoples were "heathen savages" who were obviously inferior to white races. Indeed he argued that primitive peoples were superior to modern Europeans because they did not recognise private property, or capitalism, or the state. In 1884 in his book on *The Origin of the Family*—based upon the researches of the American anthropologist L. H. Morgan—Engels gave a lyrical account of the "wonderful child-like simplicity" of the way of life in the Iroquois Indian tribes.

"Everything runs smoothly without soldiers, gendarmes, or police; without nobles, kings, governors, prefects, or judges, without prisons, without trials. All quarrels and disputes are settled by the whole body of those concerned. . . . The household is run in common and communistically by a number of families, the land is tribal property,

only the small gardens being temporarily assigned to the households. . . . Not a bit of our extensive and complicated machinery of administration is required. . . . There can be no poor or needy—the communistic household and the gens know their obligations towards the aged, the sick, and those disabled in war. All are free and equal—including the women. There is, as yet, no room for slaves nor, as a rule, for the subjugation of alien tribes. . . .”²⁰

As an admirer of primitive races, Engels (like Marx) was strongly opposed to the exploitation of native peoples by white colonists. He denounced the expansion of the empires of European states in India, Java, Algiers and elsewhere. For Marx and Engels the rising in India in 1857 was no mere mutiny of Sepoy troops but a national revolt against the English oppressors. In a series of articles in the *New York Tribune* they analysed the causes and events of the Mutiny, which they regarded as an illustration of the “general disaffection exhibited against English supremacy on the part of the great Asiatic nations. . . .”²¹

In view of Engels’s attitude towards the Jews, the Iroquois, and the natives in colonial territories, his attitude towards some of the Slavs is difficult to understand. When a Pan-Slav movement developed with Russian support in central and eastern Europe during the revolution of 1848 Engels rejected the demands of the Czechs, Serbs, Croats, and Ruthenians for independence from Habsburg or Turkish rule. Early in 1849 (in two articles in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*²²) he argued that these peoples had no natural capacity for self-government and were for ever doomed to be ruled by more advanced nations. They were “peoples without any history.” Engels asserted that these peoples would always be subject races and would “never achieve national independence.” “They are peoples who were either already under foreign rule when they

entered into the first primitive phase of civilisation or who were actually *forced* into the earliest phase of civilisation by their foreign masters.” In the true spirit of Pan-Germanism, Marx and Engels considered the Czechoslovakian peoples and the South Slavs to be “ethnic trash.”

TWO THINGS EMERGE from this study. The first is the extent to which Marx’s anti-Semitism has been played down, or even ignored, in some popular socialist accounts of Marx’s career and doctrines published in the West and intended for radical and socialist consumption. Thus, readers of Franz Mehring’s *Karl Marx* (first published in English translation in 1936) will find little to enlighten them on Marx’s anti-Semitism. There may not be exactly a conspiracy of silence but attention may be drawn to the fact that there is a difference between telling the truth and telling the whole truth. Deception by omission is still deception. Western commentators, too, with a few honourable exceptions, have tended to dodge the issue or to gloss over unwelcome facts. Scholars unfamiliar with the German language, who rely only upon English translations of the writings of Marx and Engels, may be led astray if they use selections compiled by Marxists who are prepared to suppress evidence which might display their hero in a somewhat unfavourable light.

The second point is the striking contrast between Marx’s benevolent desire to liberate the toiling masses from the tyranny of their capitalist exploiters and his ferocious attacks upon those who appeared to stand in the way of his messianic hopes—the “idiotic” peasants and the “rapacious” Jews for example. Long after Marx’s death his followers in Soviet Russia were acting quite in accordance with their master’s views when they eliminated the kulaks and persecuted the Jews.

¹ Arnold Künzli has examined the psychological roots of Marx’s anti-Semitism in *Karl Marx: eine Psychographie* (Vienna, 1966), esp. pp. 33–169, 195–226, 289–93. See also Camillo Berneri, *Le Juif anti-Sémite* (Paris, 1935).

Yet even in West Germany an attempt is apparently being made to counter this realist view. There has recently been published in Hamburg a selection of Marxist pronouncements on the Jewish question (but omitting Marx’s “Zur Judenfrage” of 1844 on the grounds that it is “easily available” elsewhere)—see: *Marxisten gegen Antisemitismus* (Hoffmann & Campe, 1974), with heavily pro-Marxist introductions by Iring Fetscher and Ilse Yago-Jung. One wonders whether a more appropriate title for this volume might not have been *Marxisten gegen Judentum und Zionismus*.

² Karl Marx, “Zur Judenfrage” in *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (Paris, 1844), reprinted in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, Vol. 1 (1964),

pp. 347–377; *A World without Jews* (tr. D. D. Runes, 1959). The first article reviewed Bruno Bauer, *Die Judenfrage* (1843), the second Bruno Bauer’s article on “Die Fähigkeit der heutigen Juden und Christen frei zu werden” in *Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz* (ed. Georg Herwegh, 1843, pp. 56–71). A reprint of the *D.-F. Jahrbücher* has recently been issued in Leipzig, Verlag Reclam (1973); Marx’s article appears on pp. 295–333.

The most recent discussion of Marx’s views is R. S. Wistrich, “Karl Marx and the Jewish Question”, *Soviet-Jewish Affairs*, vol. IV, No. 1 (Spring 1974), pp. 53–60, which contains copious documentation. See, especially, Arthur Prinz, “New Perspectives on Marx as a Jew”, *Leo Baeck Year Book* (1970), pp. 107–25; it includes the revealing text of a letter by Heinrich Graetz, the Jewish historian and a friend of Marx.

³ Marx/Engels, *The Holy Family* (1845; Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1956), p. 148.

**Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (No. 285, Sunday, 29 April 1849), p. 1, col. 1. Marx was probably the author of the article. *The Unknown Karl Marx: Documents concerning Karl Marx* (ed. R. Payne, 1972), pp. 14–15.

⁵ A small colony of Bambergers can be traced in the City of London during the mid-1850s, based on King Street, Snowhill. Zacharias Bamberger (of 19 King Street, ship and commission agents) was a partner in the firm of Prager & Bamberger, 84 Lower Thomas Street, while Louis Bamberger and Co., merchants, and Abraham Bamberger & Co., wholesale boot manufacturers, both operated from 20 King Street, Snowhill. See: Kelly & Co., *Post Office London Directory* (1855), p. 813. Of these Zacharias Bamberger seems most likely to have been Marx's money-lender.

⁶ See Marx to Engels, 31 July 1851, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. I, p. 224; and 21 January 1852, p. 444.

⁷ For example: "Spielmann always sends one away with the nasal Jewish remark 'Kaine Nootiz da' [i.e. *Keine Notiz da!*]: Marx to Engels, 18 August 1853 in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 1, p. 492. The word Yiddish, used to describe this form of speech, is noted as first appearing in print in English in the mid-1880s (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

⁸ Marx to Engels, 21 September 1859, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 2, p. 416.

⁹ Gustav Mayer, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Lassalle und Marx*, Vol. 3 of *Ferdinand Lassalle: Nachgelassene Briefe und Schriften* (first edition 1922; new edition issued by the Historical Commission of the Bavarian Academy of Science, 1967).

¹⁰ Marx to Engels, 30 July 1862, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 3, pp. 82–84. On Marx as "at once a racist himself and the cause of racism in others", see George Watson, *The English Ideology* (1973), p. 211.

¹¹ Jenny Marx to Engels, 9 April 1858, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 2, p. 314. See also the malicious and anti-Semitic gossip about Moses and Sybille Hess, in Marx to Engels, 22 September 1856, Part iii, Vol. 2, p. 147.

¹² Marx to Engels, 10 February 1865 ("Jud Horn") and 14 November 1868 ("Rabbi A. Einhorn generally known by the name of A. E. Horn") in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 3, p. 232; and Vol. 4, p. 124.

¹³ Marx to Engels, 14 April and 8 July 1870 ("little Jew Leo Frankel") in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 4, pp. 302, 338.

¹⁴ Marx to Engels, 21 August 1875, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 4, pp. 428–9.

¹⁵ Marx to Engels, 25 August 1879 in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 4, p. 490.

¹⁶ Reprinted in Karl Marx, *The Eastern Question* (ed. by Eleanor Marx & Edward Aveling, 1897: new ed. 1969), pp. 600–606.

^{16a} See, for example, Edward von Müller-Tellering, *Vorgeschnack in die künftige deutsche Diktatur von Marx und Engels* (1850).

¹⁷ For the attitude of socialists to the Jews, see E. Silberner, *Sozialisten zur Judenfrage* (1962) and George Lichtheim, "Socialism and the Jews", in *Dissent* (New York), July–August 1968.

¹⁸ Karl Marx, "Zur Judenfrage", in the *Deutsch-*

Französische Jahrbücher (1844), reprinted in Marx/Engels, *Werke*, Vol. 1 (1964), pp. 347–77. See also, Marx/Engels, *The Holy Family* (Moscow, 1965), pp. 149–150.

¹⁹ Engels to a correspondent in Vienna, 19 April 1890, in Marx/Engels, *Werke*, Vol. XXII, p. 49. See, however, Engels' 1892 preface to the London edition of his *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), where he refers to "the pettifogging business tricks of the Polish Jew, the representative in Europe of commerce at its lowest stage" (p. 360 in 1971 edition by Henderson & Chaloner).

²⁰ Engels to Bernstein, 17 August 1881, in *Eduard Bernsteins Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Engels* (ed. Hirsch, 1970), pp. 28–29. Bernstein to Engels, 9 September 1881: *Briefwechsel*, p. 37. Engels to Bebel, 1 December 1891, in *August Bebel's Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Engels* (ed. Blumenberg, 1965), p. 487.

²¹ Engels to Marx, 24 September 1852, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe* Part iii, Vol. 1, p. 405.

²² Engels to Marx, 7 March 1856 in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 2, p. 122. English translation: *Engels: Selected Writings* (ed. Henderson, Penguin, 1967), pp. 129–30.

²³ Engels to Carl Siebel, 4 June 1862, in *Friedrich Engels Profile* (ed. Hirsch, 1970) p. 250.

²⁴ Engels to Marx, 2 November 1864, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 3, p. 192.

²⁵ Engels to Marx, 11 October 1867 and 6 May 1868, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 3, p. 432 and Vol. 4, p. 52. It has not proved possible to identify Choras further.

²⁶ Engels to Marx, 15 April 1870, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 4, p. 305.

²⁷ Engels to Paul Lafargue, 22 July 1892, in *F. Engels—Paul and Laura Lafargue: Correspondence* (Moscow), Vol. iii, 1891–95, p. 184.

²⁸ Engels to Paul Ernst, 5 June 1890, in *Engels Profile*, p. 190.

²⁹ Engels to Laura Lafargue, 27 October 1893, in *Engels—Lafargue: Correspondence*, Vol. iii, 1891–95, p. 307.

³⁰ Engels, *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staates* (1884: new ed., 1962), p. 96. English translation: Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (Moscow), p. 159. Engels' book was based upon Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society, or Researches in the Line of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilisation* (1877). Engels also made use of the notes which Karl Marx had made (probably in the winter of 1880–1) on Morgan's book, *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx* (ed. Lawrence Krader, 1972).

³¹ For selections of articles and letters written by Marx and Engels on colonisation, see Marx/Engels, *On Colonisation* (Moscow) and *The First Indian War of Independence, 1857–1859* (Moscow; London, 1960).

³² Engels, "Der magyarische Kampf" and "Der demokratische Panslavismus", in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 13 January and 15 February 1849; reprinted in Karl Marx/Engels, *Werke*, Vol. VI, p. 165 ff. P. W. Blackstock and B. F. Hoselitz have translated and edited a useful anthology of these in Marx/Engels, *The Russian Menace to Europe* (1952). Pages 56–9, and 247 are important for "peoples without a history."

THEATRE

Another Play for Pinterites

By John Weightman

NO *MAN'S LAND*, which seems to be the Old Vic's final offering of the present season, is very much a piece for Pinter devotees.¹ The title is misleading. The scene is not laid in no man's land; we are in Pinterland once again, with most of those old familiar features that the author may have culled eclectically from various areas of the Absurdist universe or that he may, on the other hand, have largely invented for himself.

They have often been listed by the critics: the Closed Room (as in Sartre's *Huis Clos*) where the characters confront each other in their subject/object tensions, and which is at once home and hell, womb and battleground, a collective area or an image of the splintered individual mind; the Menace (as in Ionesco, Albee, Kafka) which is the subject/object conflict left in suspension, as it were, like a haze of paranoia; Time, Memory, and Identity (as in Ionesco, Beckett, Genet), the uncertainties of which lead to endless fluctuation of personae; and the Inexplicable Oneiric Detail (as in Ionesco, Beckett, Robbe-Grillet) which the mind can only chew on unsuccessfully, since it has no means of telling whether the detail is genuinely random, or significantly phenomenological, or symbolic within some given system—Christian, Freudian, Jungian, Marxist, etc. We can also mention the general paradox that, as in Robbe-Grillet, the language is always meticulously rhythmic and clear, while the overall effect is opaque.

The spectator can no more be clear about what is happening in Pinterland than the reader can be about the action in Robbe-Grillet's novels; and both authors have shown themselves quite expert at warding off interpretations. This is the Absurd, we might say, at one or more removes. The artist's response to the fundamental unintelligibility of the Absurd world is to create an artificially Absurd microcosm, in which our thirst for an explanation is at once stimulated

and frustrated. Pinter, like Robbe-Grillet, sets up to be as inscrutable as God; or as God would be, were He not, by definition, absent from the Absurd universe.

NOW IT IS A WELL-KNOWN FACT that the Absurd can provoke feelings of revolt in the breast of Promethean man, and this is as true of the microcosm as it is of the macrocosm. I get a little cross with Pinter, as I do with Robbe-Grillet, or with Ionesco when he relies too complacently on the aleatory promptings of the unconscious, or with Beckett when he retreats completely into the incomprehensible particular. Mind-teasing is surely as unrewarding a perversion in the intellectual register as the corresponding activity is in the sensual register. Where linguistic expression is concerned, only one form of obscurity is legitimate—the honest obscurity which comes from trying to say something so subtle or so complex that it defeats all attempts at clarity on the part of the writer, and can only be suggested by an interplay of ambiguities. Some poets and philosophers are ambiguous in this way but, as Alain says, you can thump on this kind of obscurity and it rings true.

Some Absurdist plays stand the test as well, but not, I think, *No Man's Land*. Its mysteries appear to be mostly *en trompe l'œil*; they do not seem to have been imposed upon the author himself by the ineffability of his perceptions. Either they have been carefully arranged for the benefit of those spectators who enjoy being tantalised, or they result—as in Ionesco's less successful works—from the conviction that the dream-like incomprehensible, with its inevitable margin of poetic doubt, is always a safer bet than the comprehensible, which may expose its own nakedness.

NO *MAN'S LAND* is another play in which the characterisation is entirely male. Hirst (Sir Ralph Richardson), an elderly prosperous writer, has brought back to his rather grand

¹ *No Man's Land*. By HAROLD PINTER. Eyre Methuen, £2.

Hampsteadian drawing-room Spooner (Sir John Gielgud), an elderly non-prosperous poet, whom he has picked up at Jack Straw's Castle. The subsequent action takes place entirely in the drawing-room, which becomes a prison for Spooner, between the two sexagenarians and two younger characters, Briggs and Foster, loquacious Cockney roughs or toughs, who live in the Hirst household as slightly recalcitrant servants.

The first suggestion is of a parody of a realistic homosexual play. Given the emphasis on the Hampstead locale ("Do you often hang about Jack Straw's Castle?" Spooner asks Hirst), one would have expected Hirst to pick up some young man, a fresher version of Briggs or Foster, who would then have been subjected, as Spooner is, to the sinister hostility of the already established parasites. Eventually, in fact, Spooner tries to oust Foster by offering his services to Hirst in the longest and most lyrical speech in the play, which begins in a wheedling tone and ends with the fervour of a knight pledging himself to his liege-lord. But Hirst turns a deaf ear; and in any case we are never told why he invited Spooner in the first place.

Can one sexagenarian take a sudden liking to another? Can there be a pensioner love, or pensioner friendship, at first sight? I shall soon be of an age to know, but in the meantime I think it unlikely. It is true that Hirst is a complete drunk and so his actions can be unpredictable at any point. But then why has Spooner accepted the invitation if Hirst is an obvious drunken bore? Wealthy drunks cannot be counted upon, even by would-be parasites.

IT IS NO DOUBT WRONG to look for a plot, but one inevitably does so, since false clues to a possible plot or pattern are strewn all over the place. The stage directions specify, for instance, that there should be two large mugs on a shelf in the drawing-room, and in the first scene Hirst says to Spooner (who asks about these mugs), "The second is for you." They are neither used nor referred to again, so they remain surrounded by pointless mystery. However, the word "mug" occurs later, when it is revealed that the down-at-heel ex-Oxford man, Spooner, earns a little money by clearing away beer-mugs from the tables of a pub in Chalk Farm. The two sets of mugs are not identical, being in the first instance pottery and in the second glass. But at least there is a verbal echo, which may arouse memories of "mug" in the various colloquial senses: a mug who handles mugs may be in danger of being mugged by two ugly mugs, etc.

The Neo-Absurdist of the French New Novel have now explained that they proceed to some extent by what they call the "creative", as

opposed to the "instrumental", use of language, *i.e.* they exploit the internal peculiarities of their mother-tongue to engender textual developments. If, say, in a passage by Robbe-Grillet, the word *feuilles* (leaves or pages) is followed up by references to *feu* (fire or "the late") and *filles* (girls), this is because the second and third words are said to be implicit in the first. I don't know whether Mr Pinter works on something approaching this principle, which in any case I take to be a use of the aleatory verging on lunacy and quite contrary to a proper understanding of language; but I notice that he has what might be called an uncensored interest in verbal accident. He interrupts the smooth flow of literary English with violent, unjustified obscenities, and he accepts the kind of weak pun that would be used by a bad stand-up comic. When Spencer mentions Lord Lancer, the patron of his poetry club, we get the following bit of music-hall patter:

BRIGGS: Lord Lancer?

SPOONER: Our patron.

BRIGGS: He's not one of the Bengal Lancers, is he?

SPOONER: No, no. He's of Norman descent.

It is not clear whether we have to laugh at this as a good joke, or experience camp appreciation of it as a bad joke, or wince at it as a vulgar joke that Spooner rightly chooses to disregard. But even supposing all three reactions are intended simultaneously, this is not the kind of ambiguity that I can find very interesting. There are forms of polysemia or mystery that are insipid, because their elements are not in any serious or necessary relationship with each other.

Similarly, I cannot derive much enjoyment from Briggs' comic monologue about the difficulty of getting in and out of Bolsover Street, because I have heard the same thing being done before by TV comedians; and it remains a pure verbal excrescence, intended to fill in time with local amusement.

I WOULD, IN FACT, extend the criticism of non-necessity to the play as a whole, since all its component parts—with the possible exception of Spooner—fluctuate gratuitously. Even if we willingly grant the principle that all personal identity is uncertain, why should Hirst, who seems to figure at the centre of the pattern, be at least three completely different people in the course of the action? In the first part, he is an almost speechless drunk who exits through the door on his hands and knees. At the start of the second act, he is a comic old buffer of a club-man, who claims to recognise Spooner as a former acquaintance, Charles Wetherby, whom he once cuckolded, and Spooner responds to some extent as if this were true. Towards the end, he becomes

a pseudo-poetic figure in a chair intoning a sort of chorus about time having to have a stop, with the help of Foster and Briggs (whom, incidentally, he has addressed throughout as though his surname were Denson). And at no point does he correspond to his frequently stated character, which is that of an eminent and successful writer. He is neither held together by his unexplained drunkenness, nor convincingly shattered by it; it just provides the occasion for a lot of meaningless stage-business. Perhaps, right at the end, there is a suggestion that he drinks to be outside time, because of some secret guilt or sorrow (rather like the hero of *Krapp's Last Tape*). But once again we cannot be sure if the *kitsch* is meant as a self-conscious double-take (and, if so, for what purpose?), or whether it is just unconsciously or unashamedly pretentious:

HIRST: But I hear sounds of birds. Don't you hear them? Sounds I never heard before. I hear them as they must have sounded then, when I was young, although I never heard them then, although they sounded about us then.

Pause

Yes, it is true. I am walking towards a lake. Someone is following me, through the trees. I lose him, easily. I see a body in the water, floating. I am excited. I look closer and see I was mistaken. There is nothing in the water. I say to myself, I saw a body drowning. But I am mistaken. There is nothing there.

Silence

SPOONER: No, you are in no man's land. Which never moves, which never changes, which never grows older, but which remains forever, icy and silent.

Silence

HIRST: I'll drink to that.

He drinks

Slow Fade

NO MAN'S LAND is no place, then, for the non-Pinterite, who will spend most of the evening looking in vain for a structured hinterland to Pinterland, when he should be completely modern and surrender without remorse to the kaleidoscope of incoherent appearances.

But, curiously enough, the personality of Spooner stands out sharply in several scenes, as if it belonged to a quite different, intelligible play, in which subtlety and coherence of characterisation had been deliberately aimed at. Whereas Sir Ralph can do nothing with Hirst, except show his skill at tottering and falling flat on his face without doing himself a mischief, and Terence Rigby and Michael Feast remain efficiently within the stereotype of the Cockney thug, Sir John is able to give an astonishing performance as the seedy, threadbare, genteel, obsequious, aggressive, well-spoken and excruciating man of letters. I had never seen him before in anything except noble or positive roles, but he clearly has a great range of tragi-comic dubiousness, which has perhaps never been fully exploited. By some miracle, he manages to give himself the filleted body and smudgy outline which seem to go with too persistent an addiction to indifferent verse, yet the inner spring remains unbroken. In Act Two, as Briggs serves Spooner with scrambled eggs and champagne, he asks with bullying condescension: "When did you last have champagne for breakfast?", to which the fly-blown poet replies with marvellous effect: "Well, to be quite honest, I'm a champagne drinker." The sentence seems flat enough on paper, but Sir John manages to invest it with an unforgettable chirpy complacency, as if it were a boast by a gallant meths drinker. Even non-Pinterites must salute Mr Pinter for making possible this display of virtuosity. What a pity it is not set in a firmer context.

Village Church: Capo Di Sorrento

An altar bursting with cherub-heads,
and from the Babe crooked in the Virgin's arm
a yoyo string whose limit finds
—stopped heartbeat of music—a bell.
Baroque. Its inspired bathos
—promiscuous, appalling, healing—
no more refusable than a high-chaired
jam-sticky infant waving a spoon at you,
to come and get it.

Geoffrey Holloway

SCIENCE

Behaviourism, Pro & Contra

Skinner Skinned?—By H. J. EYSENCK



B. F. SKINNER is probably the most widely known modern psychologist, as well as being the most widely misunderstood. In a recent poll of psychology students, Skinner came out on top as being the most influential; he was followed by Piaget at

number two. The name of the third, wild horses would not drag from my lips.

Here we have two books to tell us about his theories. One is by the man himself, *About Behaviourism*; the other is by a professional philosopher who is concerned with "The Pseudo-Science of B. F. Skinner." What is the argument all about? Why is Skinner important? Is he really the devil incarnate, as some critics would have us believe, attempting to deprive us of "freedom and dignity", and condition us all to become slaves and helots in a perfectly organised behaviourist state? Or is he the true prophet who will lead us into the promised land of eternal peace and happiness? What has he actually done to deserve all the adulation and hatred that his name inspires? These are difficult questions to answer.

First, let us look at Skinner the scientist. Skinner first came to the notice of his peers with his work on operant conditioning. Pavlov had pioneered experiments in so-called classical conditioning. Ring a bell in a dog's ear; then follow this with giving him some food; and, after a while, the repeated contiguity of the two stimuli (the bell, the conditioned stimulus; and the food, the unconditioned stimulus) will lead to the dog salivating even to the bell alone. He has become conditioned, and he now responds to the conditioned stimulus where previously he would not have done so. Note that this paradigm is dependent on the previous existence of a "true" reflex, namely the salivary reflex. Without

that to stimulate there would be no experiment, and no conditioned reflex.

Around the same time, another Russian physiologist was experimenting with a rather different kind of conditioning. (Is it an accident that much of the early work on conditioning was done in pre- and post-War Russia, in the early years of this century?). Bechterev would wait until his dog performed some particular act, such as lifting his paw. He would then give him food. Gradually, the dog would lift his paw more and more frequently; he had been conditioned to perform this particular feat. But this is quite a different kind of conditioning. There is no need for any reflex in the first place, and there is no particular stimulus which sets off the whole chain of events. Behaviour has to be "emitted" first, as Skinner rather picturesquely puts it. This behaviour, which has been singled out by the experimenter, is then followed by positive or negative reinforcement (reward or punishment). This is the essence of operant conditioning.

IN THE BETWEEN-WAR YEARS, American psychologists were mostly interested in Pavlovian conditioning, and carried out many interesting and important experiments in this field; they succeeded in verifying and extending most of Pavlov's original discoveries. Some, however, pursued another line. Thorndike, for instance, carried on with work which was rather similar to that of Bechterev, and led him to an interpretation of learning in terms of his "law of effect", which sounds very much like a simple statement of the facts of operant conditioning—acts which are followed by positively reinforcing consequences are repeated, while acts which are followed by negatively reinforcing consequences are eliminated. J. B. Watson, the founding father of Behaviourism, found in Pavlovian conditioning the tool he needed for constructing a purely mechanistic theory of human behaviour. He had little time for Bechterev and Thorndike, and most behaviourists followed him.

Skinner was the exception. His early work was concerned entirely with the law of effect, and with the construction of schedules of reinforcement. He believed that Pavlovian conditioning, even if it existed (a point on which he was sometimes doubtful) had little general interest and importance. He rightly saw that most of our actions are not mediated by conditioned reflexes of the Pavlovian kind. We do, however, behave as if some hedonistic model were correct. We are either driven by the stick or attracted by the carrot; and the task of the psychologist, as he saw it, is to make more precise these rather vague concepts, and show just how they work in detail.

In this he succeeded brilliantly. He constructed the Skinner Box—now part of the furniture of every psychological laboratory—to test and demonstrate his theories. This box contains a lever, which the rat can press; each press is carefully recorded on a moving sheet of paper. Occasionally, such presses lead to food pellets being released into a trough; this is the reinforcement. Alternatively, the floor of the cage may be electrified regularly, giving the rat an unpleasant shock; this can be avoided by bar pressing. Later on, Skinner turned to pigeons. They cannot press bars, but they can peck at an illuminated spot, and in this way secure positive reinforcements or avoid negative ones. Skinner, in this way, succeeded in creating a very suitable tested for investigating the precise effects of different schedules of reinforcement. His studies, pursued over many years, have rightly become famous; and without doubt, they added much important knowledge to our understanding of the way the law of effect works.

But they would hardly have secured him public attention had he not donned the mantle of the prophet and extended his findings and interpretations into the human field.

TYPICAL OF THE WAY in which he did this is his account of the origins of superstition. Simplifying somewhat, we might say that (in his view) superstitious practices arise because accidental actions are followed by positive reinforcement on a purely chance basis. You put on a particular article of clothing, and your football team wins unexpectedly. So next time you put the same article of clothing on, hoping that perhaps it will have the same effect—a superstition is born! Skinner tried to demonstrate this in the laboratory. He would leave a bunch of pigeons together in a large cage overnight, with the hopper dishing out grain at varied intervals, on a random basis. In the morning, many of the pigeons would behave very oddly. Some would run around with their beaks in the air, others with

one wing lower than the other. What had happened? The birds had been doing just this when the hopper dealt out largesse, reinforcing what they were doing. Consequently they hopefully (if such an anthropomorphic word be permitted, for the sake of brevity) repeated the same act a number of times. Finally, the hopper erupted again, confirming their belief that, in some way, the movement originally made had, in fact, produced the reinforcement. Thus we can produce superstitious beliefs in pigeons. These beliefs can be as difficult to eliminate as are religious, political and other superstitions and prejudices in humans!

It is easy to see the attraction of the experiment and its explanation, and to realise that it presents us with an interesting and appealing bridge from animal behaviour to human behaviour. Superstition is difficult to explain on our usual *homo sapiens* model of man, i.e., of a rational being weighing consequences and deciding on scientific grounds between alternatives. Here is a purely mechanical model which would seem to account for all that we find it difficult to explain. Naturally, this has much to be said for itself, and many psychologists find it convincing. Many people do not like the conclusion—are we really no better than dumb beasts? Are our cherished beliefs nothing but accidentally reinforced actions, having no validity whatever? If this is how religious practices originate, how can we any longer justify these beliefs? It is clear why Skinner is regarded as having touched many tender spots, and exposed many a twitching nerve. In just the same way was Copernicus looked upon when he displaced the earth from the centre of the Universe: this is blasphemy, and not to be tolerated.

IN THE LAST DOZEN YEARS, Skinner has practically given up his scientific work, and has concentrated on the working out of his more general ideas on how the scientific laws he had introduced could be used for human betterment. It is this work that has earned him fame and denunciation in the popular press, and it is this work that we have to consider here.

True, he had always had something of the sort in mind from way-back-when; in his early years he wrote *Walden Two*, a kind of Utopian novel showing how a community could be founded, and could exist happily, following entirely the principles of operant conditioning. Thoreau might have turned in his grave, but many students found this work profoundly impressive. (This is a recent happening; at first, the book did not sell at all well.) The book is not well written, in any literary meaning of the term; the

characters are wooden, and human relations are deficiently portrayed. But the message is interesting, and that of course is what concerns Skinner. Clearly, he is looking forward to the creation of a psychological technology, which would enable us to create a particular society according to explicit specifications, and to make sure that it worked. Whether this notion frightens you or fills you with enthusiasm might be an interesting personality test; certainly both reactions can be found among his readers. I must confess it has both effects on me simultaneously. Perhaps this ambivalence will emerge more clearly in the course of what I still have to say.

ONE OF THE FIRST ATTEMPTS to create such a technology was made by Skinner in the field of education. Teaching machines, and the psychological principles underlying them, had in fact been invented long before Skinner. Pressey is usually accorded priority in this respect. But Skinner put all his tremendous energy behind the notion; he held a very prestigious position at Harvard; and his instrumentation was more advanced. What had fizzled out when Pressey did it now caught on; and Skinner's name became linked with the whole idea of teaching machines. Actually, the principles Skinner enunciated in this connexion are of doubtful validity, and success has been more difficult to attain than was once thought likely. Furthermore, it has been found that there are considerable individual differences in the reactions of children and adults to these machines. Thus, introverts tend to like them, and do well with them; extroverts tend to prefer the personal contact with a teacher, and not to do well with the machines. There are many reasons (into which we cannot now go) which have halted the triumphant march of the teaching machine. At the moment, it seems to be stalled; and only little research is going into the improvement of existing models. The idea is a good one; but it was perhaps launched too soon, and with too little solid foundation in definitive experiment, to bear the burden placed upon it. Skinner argued largely from rat to man, and while the argument is not necessarily wrong (as some critics maintain), it needs much amplification and many changes in emphasis before it becomes convincing and practically useful.

Latterly, Skinner has extended his scope to cover the whole of civilisation, and to propose a new philosophy which would lay the necessary fundamentals for a more widespread use of operant conditioning. He sees in operant conditioning

the magic key which will unlock the door to all the solutions to our manifold practical problems which have hitherto proved recalcitrant. In this he is almost certainly more likely to be correct than those who follow the modern "permissive" line; or those who see the solution in Revolution and a Universal Socialism. Socialism does not solve any of the problems of human living, as we have seen in those countries which have abolished capitalism; and "permissiveness", by trying to untie the knot between actions and consequences, is actually preventing the lessons of life from being learned. Skinner is certainly not completely and one hundred per cent right; but, in my view, he comes perhaps closer to a meaningful solution than most other writers.

This is, of course, due to the fact that he is strong where they are weak, *i.e.*, in his knowledge of psychological principles. Economists, sociologists, philosophers and politicians tend to postulate a kind of human nature which is in agreement with their *a priori* assumptions, but which (perhaps unfortunately) is far removed from human nature as we know it to be. It will not do to dismiss Skinner, as many people tend to do, because they do not like his premises or his conclusions. The premises are based on experimental studies, and have to be criticised on technical grounds. The conclusions may be offensive to our humanistic ideals, but that does not mean that they do not follow from the premises. Skinner's work has been largely condemned by those least able to understand it—journalists, TV personalities, and educationalists and sociologists obviously out of their depth. Tibor R. Machan, a professional philosopher, is another such; his book¹ may appeal to amateur philosophers who like to toss around arguments about free will and determinism without coming to grips with some very fundamental facts. Skinner's contribution is fundamentally not about philosophy, but about psychological facts; any discussion of these facts is unfortunately missing from Machan's book.

SKINNER MAY HAVE ENCOURAGED such an approach with his latest book,² where he says:

Behaviourism is not the science of human behavior; it is the philosophy of that science.

But he is not using the term "philosophy" in the same sense as Machan, and in particular, he makes it very clear that he is not identifying his "radical behaviourism" with vulgar materialism (as Machan supposes). Skinner is talking about methodology. His concern is with the philosophy of science, not with epistemology and other ancient doctrines and disputes which are of no concern to him. He lists twenty common but

¹ *The Pseudo-Science of B. F. Skinner*. By TIBOR R. MACHAN. Arlington House. \$9.95.

² *About Behaviourism*. By B. F. SKINNER. Jonathan Cape, £3.50.

erroneous assumptions about behaviourism. It is interesting to read Machan's book and note how many of these he fails to identify as erroneous, and criticises instead as if they were indeed part and parcel of behaviourism! I will just quote a few of these assumptions which, according to Skinner, do *not* form part of the behaviouristic creed:

- (1) Behaviourism ignores consciousness, feelings, and states of mind.
- (2) It neglects innate endowment, and argues that all behaviour is acquired during the lifetime of the individual.
- (3) It does not attempt to account for cognitive processes.
- (4) It has no place for intention or purpose.
- (5) It assigns no role to a self or sense of self.

These five must do as a sample of the whole list. Readers who believe that these sentences express behaviouristic ideas are invited to read Skinner's book; they clearly need to have their ideas refurbished. Perhaps Professor Machan will lead the way.

TO SAY ALL THIS is merely to say that some criticisms frequently put forward of Skinner's views are not just wrong but completely misinformed and misleading. They do not require an answer, but simple factual correction. Skinner writes pretty clearly and simply; it is difficult to see quite why his critics could not have obtained a better understanding of his position from reading his books. This raises a number of interesting questions. In this field, there is so much "inspired" misunderstanding that one sometimes doubts the ability of the protagonists actually to understand the position of someone whom they suspect of disagreeing with them on one or another fundamental and rather important point. Apparently, any stigma is good enough to beat a dogma with. Nevertheless, there are good empirical and other reasons to think that Skinner may not have got it all quite right. Oddly enough, his opponents usually neglect these useful weapons in favour of their preferred, rather brittle ones.

In the first place, the position of the law of effect, on which Skinner's whole philosophy is based, is somewhat insecure. It is often said that the law is circular. We say that behaviour is determined by the positive or negative consequences of an action. But when we ask how we know that these consequences are positive or negative, we are told that this is so because of the particular behaviour shown. If the dog learns to lift his paw because you feed him whenever he lifts his paw, you say that feeding a hungry dog is positively reinforcing. That makes sense. If a

human subject presses a lever because you occasionally give him cigarettes or sweets or pennies after he has pressed it, that makes sense too. But we would still like to have alternative ways of discovering which reinforcements are positive and which are negative, or which are more positive, or more negative, than others.

There are, of course, ways and means of doing this. We can ask our human subjects which they like better—the cigarettes, the sweets, or the pennies. Most people have no difficulties in answering such a question. With animals we can institute a reinforcement cafeteria, allowing them choice between different reinforcers. Animals tend to make their preferences quite clear. But if we can have such an alternative method of deciding on the nature of reinforcers, where is the problem? Have we not escaped from the circularity of the argument? We have indeed, but we have done so only by disproving the theory. It is usually found that animals (and men) do not necessarily work harder, or learn better, when reinforced with the rewards they themselves consider more reinforcing! In other words, the law is either circular and tautological—or else it is wrong. Skinner does not try to deal with such complications; but the reader of his books should be aware of the difficulties raised by such experiments. These difficulties may not be fatal, but they require consideration.

Another problem is raised by the spinach experiment. Your children refuse to eat spinach, and you feel strongly that spinach is good for them. What do you do? The traditional Victorian parent would simply tell his child to get on with it and not make a fuss, expressing strong paternal displeasure. The Skinnerian would give small positive reinforcements to the child—he would consider this to be much more civilised and likely to work much better. When the experiment was tried, the outcome was that both groups of children learned to eat their spinach. However, when the control was withdrawn (no more paternal pressure, no more reinforcements) the children brought up in the old-fashioned way continued to eat their spinach, while the children brought up along Skinnerian lines stopped! This is a simple experiment, but it ought to have caused Skinnerians a lot of heart-searching. Reinforcement works very well while it lasts. But it does not usually establish long-continued habits which persist once reinforcement régimes come to an end. If we want to make children continue to "behave well" long after we are unable to reinforce them, Skinnerism may not exactly be the best method.

These and many other related empirical questions are clearly important, but are not much considered by Skinner or his critics. They may be

decisive in coming to a proper scientific conclusion about the value of his theories, and his whole system. Pavlovian conditioning affects the emotions, rather than muscular actions; and these conditioned responses tend to be much more resistant to extinction; they may last for many years. Perhaps operant psychologists have been premature in relegating Pavlovian conditioning to the historical chapters in the text-books of psychology; this method may be far more important than is widely believed nowadays.

ONE SHOULD PERHAPS END on a larger philosophical note, as both our authors would doubtless wish. Skinner has advocated the use of a technology which has had some successes in limited experimental conditions, and which is based on

somewhat shaky theoretical foundations. Even if it could conceivably be extended to embrace the whole of social life, would it be sufficient for our purposes? The real question surely is—for what *purposes*, and in the service of what *values* and *ideals*, should a technology be used? By definition, behaviourism as a technology cannot answer this question. To many people, however, this defect may loom very large indeed. Skinner seems to expect people to use his technology in a benevolent manner. History surely does not suggest that this would necessarily be the case. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes!* I can only hope that the very real problems and questions which the success of modern behaviourism has raised will be discussed intelligently and wisely; much may depend on the answers.

Spot the Ball

Once, with a certain pride, we kept attempts
To the minimum. Reason was all:
To trace invisibly the upraised eyes
Of backs and forwards; where the lines converged
To plant our crosses.

Later we combed the stand advertisements
For smudged lettering, or held the thin page
Up to the light to test for shadow.
Those paler patches, blotches near the goal
Could well be erasures.

And, later still, the joking nonchalance,
The stray marks in all the wrong places,
Footlights and flags and corners that the teams
Had turned their backs on. Even the goalie's crutch
Was not immune.

Four years now and never on the right end
Of a Snowball. Thursday's edition tells
Of prizes bound for places elsewhere.
The "Belfast man who requests no publicity"
Is always another.

We persevere from habit. When we try
These days our hope's mechanical, we trust.
To accident. We are selective
No longer, the full hundred crosses
Filling the sky.

Frank Ormsby

Dog Prospectus

The dog must see your corpse. The last thing that you feel
Must be the dog's warm-tufa licking of your hand,
Its clear gaze on your trembling lips, then
Snapping at flies, catches the last breath in its teeth,
And trots off with you quickly to the Judge,
Your advocate and friend. The corpse a dog has not seen
Pollutes a thousand men; the Bishop's hound
Tucked like a cushion at his tombstone feet
Once through the door carries a helix staff
And looks like Hermes on that side, the Bishop tumbling
On the puppy-paws of death . . .

as a temporary Professor at this U

I practice, when the campus swarms with them,
Focusing out the students, so the place
Is amply empty, except for a few dogs.
They should study here, the U enrol them
And take more fees, at agreed standards teaching
Elementary Urinology, and Advanced
Arboreal Urinology: the Seasons and their Smells;
Freshman Osteology: the Selection and Concealment
Of Bones; Janisology: the Budding Watchdog, with
Fawning, a two-semester course. Lunar Vocalisation,
Or Baying at the Moon; *the lame-dog bid for sympathy*
With big sad eyes and hanging tongue, which is
Cosmetic Ophthalmology with Intermittent Claudication
In the Rhetorical Physionomy Gym. Shit and Its Meaning;
Coprology: the Dog-Turd and Modern Legislation; the
Eating of Jezebel, or Abreactive Phantasing; the Black Dog
Or Studies in Melancholy; Worry
As a Term Favourable to Dogs. . . .

How to Beg:

A Long-Term Economic Good; with How to Fuck
Or Staggering in Six-Legged Joy; Fleas,
A Useful Oracle and in this same last year
The Dedicated Castrate or God's Eunuch,
The canine celibate as almost-man;
And finally how, if uncastrated,
To change places and become Master-Dog,
The Double Lycanthrope and Goddog-Doggod,
Wise Hermes of the Intelligent Nose

Leading to the Degree of Master of Hounds.

The campus throngs with hounds, this degree
Is very popular, alas,
I focus them out: in ample emptiness
A few humans hurry to their deep study
Without prospectus, without University.
This one is desirous of becoming a perfect scribe:
He knows vigilance, ferocity, and how to bark;
This one studies gazing as the dogs used to
On the images of the gods, as prophets should.
What gods, what images?

Those glorious trees, trilling with birds, cicadas,
Pillars of the sky, our books and ancestors;
I piss my tribute here, I cannot help it;
The few humans left, noble as dogs once were,
Piss on this university.

Alistair Elliot

A Warning to Wordsworth: or, The Lay-Detector Rampant

... the intensity of emotion expressed in the
"Lucy poems" occurs elsewhere in Wordsworth's
poetry of the period only in those poems
involving Dorothy and, therefore ... she
becomes the leading candidate for the original
of Lucy. This conclusion leads logically ...
(etc. etc. etc.)

DONALD H. REIMAN,
T.L.S., 1 November 1974

Dear William, watch it: he can read your pulse,
but Wassermann-tests all your waters first—
"Tis three foot long, two wide" is something else,
and mirrored mountains make him fear the worst.

"Proteus rising" (shades of urethritis!)
leads on to London's sweetly gliding pee,
but Venice has the best claim to excite us:
"She must espouse the everlasting Sea."

Can he declare you treated as a wife
the unvisited City (ooh! its Grand Canal!)?
"The dreary intercourse of daily life"
meant no-holds-barred to a Romantic gal?

And what went on in Davy Jones's locker
when she encountered her drowned sailor-brother?
Something no doubt not quite according to Cocker-
mouth standards of a kiss or bit of other.

Be warned then, though perhaps it doesn't matter
if hygroscopic poets are abused
or glotterotic critics merely flatter:
soon all are far more deeply interfused.

NOTES & TOPICS

Dr Spock Thinks Again

Of Babies & Bathwater—By KENNETH MINOGUE

THE VERY TITLE of Dr Spock's new book —*Bringing Up Children in a Difficult Time*¹— has caught one of the fundamental undercurrents of contemporary civilisation, namely, self-pity. Indeed, the most casual glance at what Spock has written over the last twenty-five years makes clear that his thought quivers with responsiveness to the newest current available, and this sensitivity is unencumbered by the slightest hint of criticism. Any alert reader is likely to wonder: Is it in fact the case that today is a difficult time to bring up children? The great advantage a modern parent has over his predecessors of earlier generations is the much enhanced likelihood that the mother will survive the birth, and the child grow beyond infancy. Compared with these hazards of yesterday, the Generation Gap, the Babel of moral voices, and the taint of Televised Violence are as nothing. It is, of course, true that modern parents, having been relieved of many genuine anxieties, have taken up fanciful fears with all the more enthusiasm. But human silliness is hardly to be compared with the irrevocabilities of human mortality.

One general belief which in part used to mitigate parental anxieties was that of original sin. To bring up a child was thought to be an activity in which the usages of virtue and civilisation were inculcated in a creature whom many powerful impulses led in a contrary direction. The blame for human iniquity which used to be visited upon our remote ancestor Adam has now been scientifically shared out on parents. It is they who may "transmit deprivation", prompt "Oedipal conflicts", or supposedly induce "schizophrenia" by binding children close in the suffocating ties of family life. All these doctrines treat children less as human beings than as social organisms totally dependent upon the conditioning of their environment. Children are, as Dr Spock acutely observes at one point, born lawyers; and like the Jets who harangue Officer Krupke in *West*

Side Story they have not been slow in employing these doctrines for purposes of self-defence. The crazy mixed-up kid is irreproachable because he just never had a chance.

Dr Spock faces this problem early on:

When I was an undergraduate, my future wife, Jane, explained to me that psychologists believe a child's character is pretty well formed by three years of age. I immediately answered, "That is ridiculous"—not because I knew anything about it but because I didn't like the implication that a person couldn't keep changing as much as he wanted to.

Dr Spock's instinct was sound, and he goes on to say some useful things which might well dissipate the anxiety of parents who have been terrified out of their wits by psychiatrists insisting on how fatally humans slide down the tracks established in the womb, in the first six months of life, the first two years, or five years, or whatever arbitrary figure happens to prevail in the psychological thought of that moment in time. It is certainly one of Dr Spock's considerable virtues that he tries hard to dissipate these anxieties, but even he cannot resist writing that

the period from five months to a year or a year-and-a-half is perhaps the most significant of all in setting people's fundamental attitudes towards life—not the specifics of their later outlook or ambitions but the underlying tone of their feelings about other people and themselves.

What is objectionable here is not so much the vagueness of the phrase "underlying tone" as the acceptance of an entirely organic view of human beings as creatures that move in predestinate grooves. Believing (to continue borrowing from the famous limerick) that humans are buses rather than trams, I prefer Lord Chesterfield's view of the matter, as expressed in a letter to his son written in the saner intellectual climate of 1748: "People are, in general, what they are made, by education and company, from fifteen to five-and-twenty; consider well, therefore, the importance of your next eight or nine years—your whole [future] depends on them." Chesterfield in

¹ *Bringing up Children in a Difficult Time*. By DR BENJAMIN SPOCK. The Bodley Head, £1.95.

his old-fashioned way is not talking about social organisms but about people, and allowing some latitude to the rational capacities of human beings. Even *his* latitude seems a little restrictive. There's a Henry V buried in many a Prince Hal.

IT IS NOT ONLY THE TITLE, but also the subtitle which reveals a lot about what Dr Spock is thinking: "*A philosophy of parental leadership and high ideals.*" The mind is likely to slide past these bland words, but each of them is revealing. There is not a sentence in anything Dr Spock has written which a professional philosopher would regard as philosophical; yet there is solid support in the habits of our language for styling any account of an activity rendered in terms of the application of principles "a philosophy." Dr Spock does have principles to apply, some clearly articulated and others lurking in the shadow of his thought. We shall look at some of the latter presently. Among the explicit principles are many which have revealed to Dr Spock just how slippery is this business of writing manuals of which he is so experienced a master. For the advice given in manuals must always be in general terms, and the reader has not yet been born who cannot find ways of misapplying it. The result is that Dr Spock has been forced into a variety of clarifications upon which the press initially seized in order to turn his latest book into news as a set of "recantations."

One such "recantation" is in the field of sexual differentiation wherein Dr Spock does indeed confess to having shown "the usual male discrimination", though as with most of his recantations, there is a strong undertow of defensive qualification. He claims it is only his mode of expression rather than the actual views as the cause of the fault:

I've been pounced on for having said in *Baby and Child Care*, concerning a father's attitude towards his daughters, "I'm thinking of little things he can do like complimenting her on her dress, or hairdo, or the cookies she's made." The critics don't quote my next sentence: "When she's older, he can show that he's interested in her opinions and let her in on some of his."

It would hardly be surprising if Women's Liberationists should think tossing into a pool of crocodiles too good for him on the basis of this sort of thing; and furthermore there seems little to choose between either of the sentences in question. They remind us that Dr Spock is a countryman of Dale Carnegie and Norman Vincent Peale, for we often run across passages of pure social plastic. Women may feel patronised by these hypocrisies, but the entire human race is reduced to absurdity when we read:

The way to have an agreeable, meaty conversation—even with other adults—is to put yourself in tune with them by listening attentively and sympathetic-

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index

on CENSORSHIP

SHOULD WRITERS BOYCOTT SOUTH AFRICA?

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ally, with your eyes meeting theirs and your facial expression mirroring their mood, whether that mood is humorous, indignant, or awed. Then when it's your turn to speak you take off from their remarks, showing that you respond to them in thought and feeling. So a conversation is woven by two sympathetic souls working with the same threads.

Spock's sense of the up-to-date hasn't faltered on the question of women. Feminine work must be shown to be just as important as anything men do, and boys should be allowed dolls, though little girls should be discouraged from messing about with pistols. Indeed (and this is a further point where Dr Spock has kept up with the rumbling band wagon of enlightenment) all children should be kept away from war-like toys. This view is one of the many which derive from Dr Spock's now celebrated view to the effect that America is a violent and unjust society, and that this character is the result of American preoccupation with dramas of violence. Hence children should be discouraged from playing with plastic soldiers. They should not, however, be *forbidden* them, a point we shall need to reconsider.

TO INTERPRET THESE NEW OPINIONS as "recantations" is to do an injustice to the fundamental continuity of his thought. Some of the changes derive from the fact that his mature thought has advanced precisely in step with current social wisdom. Others are the unavoidable clarifications of the Manual paper-back writer. For advice is always in general terms, and (as Dr Spock himself recognises) each case is different. Given the irreducible complexity of human life, there is always an arbitrary element involved when the worried parent decides *which* general rubric applies to the crisis he faces. Hence the new Spock book is partly devoted to clearing up misunderstandings resulting from even the later editions of *Baby and Child Care* (1969). In the Manual itself, for example, Dr Spock advised parents engaged in the delicate operation of toilet training to desist if they ran into resistance, since he thought that making a battle out of such training would merely intensify the difficulties.

This well-meant advice [he now writes] had the unfortunate effect of making a lot of parents who weren't tactless or bossy so apprehensive about conflict that they hardly dared start toilet training at all. As soon as they did and the child showed the least resistance, the parents quickly stopped their efforts. And when they tried again, however tactfully and gently, the child promptly balked again.

It is certainly a major theme of Dr Spock's reflections that unnecessary conflict should be avoided; and it is this which has often given him the reputation of child-centred permissiveness.

Whatever he now says in supporting parental firmness, however, goes no way to legitimating any notion of authority, and "authoritarian" in his vocabulary stands for something bad. Some of the work that the word "authority" normally does here turns up under the idea of "leadership"—some, but not all. A parent, he advises, "must get up the courage to be a firm leader." Indeed, this requirement is more than merely socially desirable, for "nature counts on parents to have the sense and the assurance to lead." Further the exercise of this kind of leadership is a skill involving the mastery of various tricks which parents may be taught.

IT IS HERE THAT WE APPROACH the heart of Dr Spock's "philosophy." Throughout the book he is adumbrating a conception of family life which is never explicitly worked out. It needs to be remembered that in European societies the family is not merely a natural and procreative association of a man and a woman, but also one of the pillars of our understanding of political life. It is the heartland of the idea of privacy, without which a whole dimension of our moral experience would disappear. Those who are hostile to this moral experience are usually entirely consistent in presenting the family both as an institution causing infinite psychological damage to human beings, and as a barrier to the production of a new kind of human being. Utopian writers from Plato onwards have sought to substitute the all-inclusive Community for the arbitrarily variable conditions of family life. Indeed, it is striking that the most sinister words in our political vocabulary—such words as "despotism" and "domination"—originally described the form of rule found in the family circle. It is, then, entirely characteristic of Dr Spock's intense sensitivity to the currents of contemporary thought that he should have picked up strong elements of this kind of communal thinking.

THE GENERAL PROBLEM round which his advice constantly circles is that of how we are to understand being a parent, and some of the resources for doing so are drawn from the vocabulary of political rather than domestic life. In politics, a ruler and a leader are radically different kinds of thing. A ruler is an authority who makes and enforces the rules within which those who are ruled pursue their own concerns and purposes. A leader, by contrast, directs his followers towards some single shared goal like military victory, winning a match, keeping a ship afloat, or making a motor car. It would be a mistake to call the British Prime Minister or the American President "leaders", except perhaps in

war-time, or in the context of some call that we should all pull together (the point of such a call being precisely that we are regrettably not pulling together). Adolf Hitler, by contrast, clearly recognised that he wanted to lead rather than to rule the German people. For the significant point is that a ruler needs only obedience from those he rules, whereas a leader needs their enthusiasm as well. Leadership is, thus, a good deal more strenuous than rulership.

Now it is difficult quite to see a parent in either of these roles. Parents no doubt do rule their children, but this is a form of authority in which rules are largely habits and expectations, and the procedures are constantly modified in important ways by the presence of emotion—love, no doubt, primarily, though hate may also play its part. On the other hand, it seems odd to regard parents as leaders, because only the most absurdly cohesive family is putting its shoulder to the same wheel all the time. In most families, most members spend a large part of the day following their own devices. Neither leadership nor rulership quite fits the sort of families in which we actually live. Nor are the other terms of the political vocabulary much use. In earlier times, families were unambiguously patriarchal, and in our case

they are merely ambiguously so. Hence they present a confusing pattern in which democracy, monarchy, oligarchy, civil war, and *détente* may all be glimpsed, without any of them providing much aid to the understanding.

There are indeed situations in which the use of these terms affects behaviour. There are families who follow the practice, which the *Reader's Digest* long ago regarded as a sovereign remedy for childish financial irresponsibility, of deciding all matters at a duly constituted family council. Father lays on the table what he earns, and submits all questions—from discipline to what is to be done about the coming holidays—to collective decision. This looks a bit like democracy, but it is in fact merely one of those despotisms (common in the East these days) where the despot has picked up some strange fancies. For while parents can indeed consult their children and involve them in deliberation, they cannot do so as equals. In fluency, in experience, and above all in financial responsibility, they are in a strikingly different position.

Dr Spock's exploration of this theme posits three ways of managing a human association. One of these corresponds to the child-centred permissiveness of which he has often been

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accused, and he calls it “*laissez-faire* or excessively permissive.” There’s no nonsense about value-free terminology here. At the other extreme is what he calls “authoritarian discipline,” and the very use of the word “authoritarian” tells us how bad that is. Astride the golden mean is to be found Dr Spock’s notion of the ideal form of human association (to which the family is assimilated) and it is called “democratic leadership.” This typology is discussed in terms of an experiment derived from the field of social psychology, an experiment which has the look of a parable about it.

Different collections of youths get together to form carpentry clubs, and must cooperate together to build bird-houses. The authoritarian leader tells them what to do and gets it done efficiently, but the work only goes ahead when he is supervising it. Left alone, youth abandons the collective goal and actually turns to doing what it wants to do. The democratic leader has an extensive discussion of what the group is going to do. He “doesn’t squelch anyone or try to impose his ideas. He just keeps the discussion fairly orderly and perhaps reminds the group of certain realities if they forget them.” Funnily enough, this group ends up making bird-houses like the rest.

NAKEDLY DISPLAYED in *Bringing up Children in a Difficult Time*, then, is that highly sinister modulation of modern thought by which the idea of democracy has become synonymous with the manipulation of enthusiasm towards some required goal. Freedom consists in doing anything you like, so long as it’s making bird-houses. You only need to transpose this into the grotesque vocabulary of “consciousness raising” to realise that in throwing out the idea of authority, Dr Spock has thrown out genuine freedom and independence as well. If he weren’t a conscientious pediatrician one might well accuse him of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. The significance of a clear practice of authority is that there is no doubt about the externality of the command or prohibition; and this allows people the autonomy of working out for themselves how to come to terms with it. Leadership, on the other hand, meddles with the inner feelings in the attempt to produce a total communion of enthusiasm. Consider Dr Spock, with his new decision about toy pistols, confronting Butch who wants to play Cowboys and Indians:

If I had a three- or four-year-old son who asked me to buy him a pistol, I’d tell him—with a friendly smile, not a scowl—that I didn’t want to give him a gun for even pretend shooting because there is too much meanness and killing in the world; that we

must all learn to get along in a friendly way together. I’d ask him if he didn’t want some other present instead.

After a few years of this treatment, it would take a very strong-minded child indeed to know what he really wanted at all. His wise father would always be at hand dishing out the public relations with a friendly smile, and encouraging in him “a fond attitude toward all humanity.”

DR SPOCK is vulnerable to these strictures because he has written what is quite extensively a political book without ever having thought out clearly what he is doing. In terms of the strict purpose of his manual, it would be foolish to press these considerations too far, because much of the time he is talking about young children and merely advising parents that too much forbidding will lead to pointless conflicts of will. It would be rare for parents not to manipulate small children by the simple device of diverting their attention away from troublesome pursuits; and it would be a lunatic purist who insisted on running a family solely in terms of *Do’s* and *Don’ts*. But this is merely to face once more the fact that a family is a very odd sort of human association, and that none of our ordinary vocabulary of management covers it easily.

Dr Spock, however, is able to avoid many of these difficulties because the emotion of love is always available for him as the panacea of last resort. We must love ourselves, our neighbours, people of other lands, and especially minorities. This is excellent advice in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount because the Christian tradition has extremely clear ideas about the respective provinces of mercy and justice. As the unifying theme of a practical manual, it raises difficulties. Many people are not at all lovable. They range from the vicious to the merely ugly and irresponsible. In order to love humanity as such, we must abstract their many repulsive characteristics and explain them away in sociological or other non-moral terms. And what we are left loving is but a shell—the social plastic of human relations as they appear in much that Dr Spock writes.

A similar difficulty arises from another attempt to characterise the parent-child relation—that of friendship. In wanting parents and children to be “friends”, Dr Spock is again displaying his quite uncanny sensitivity to current opinion. It is not that the aspiration itself is either new or foolish. John Locke in *Thoughts on Education* (1693) recognised that the end of child-rearing should be a relation of friendship between parent and

child. He also recognised, however, that this could not properly happen until the children were relatively mature and rational. Friendship is a relation of equals, and parents and children are not at all equal. Friendship is only really possible between people who are not formally responsible for each other. We usually expect from friends things we do not expect from people of immature years. The attempt to be "friends" with one's children may these days amount to many things, and one of them is a disposition to refuse to take responsibility for them. This is a modern perversion of family life which, it is only fair to say, Dr Spock does recognise, though only in the limited case of fathers who leave the discipline to mothers.

IN DR SPOCK'S WORK we may see clearly that powerful tendency of modern thought by which all the many subtle distinctions and discriminations that human beings have evolved to express their complex cultural impulses are being melted down into a single unity called, indifferently, society or community. This can be clearly seen in

his views on school, for which one must turn to *Baby and Child Care*.

"The main lesson in school," we are told, "is how to get along in the world. Different subjects are merely means to this end."

In Dr Spock's world, *everything* is subordinated to the end of undifferentiated sociability, served up with the custard of love; and the isolated swot getting on with his quadratic equations or ablativ absolutes is an image of failure. "The child who doesn't know how to make friends needs help in becoming sociable and appealing." In remarks of this kind (and they abound) we can see many traces of the philosophy of social adjustment which David Riesman criticised so cogently a generation ago in *The Lonely Crowd*. The Spockian idea that "there's no use knowing a lot if you can't be happy, cannot get along with people, can't hold the kind of job you want" is one that leads straight to the tranquilliser. It is not entirely absurd to wonder whether the many ingenious forms of private-enterprise violence current in the world today may not be the revenge of personal reality against this creed of indiscriminating sociability.

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LEONARD MICHAELS, "Growing Up",
Partisan Review, XLI, 1 (1974)

"For those young men who reached their maturity in the fifties, and who aspired to be grown-up during that decade, when as one participant has written, everyone wanted to be thirty, there was considerable moral prestige in taking a wife, and hardly because a wife was going to be one's maid-servant or 'sexual object.' Decency and Maturity, a young man's 'seriousness', were at issue. . . ."

PHILIP ROTH, *My Life As a Man* (1974)

THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN decades which do take on a distinctive temper as decades, usually because they conduct life past some point of high transition, or are started by or followed by some sharp historical oscillation. The transitional 1890s and the gay, materialist, lost-generation 1920s have passed very clearly into the folklore in this way, become basic signposts to the evolution of modern Western history. Nowadays it seems to be the 1950s—and especially the American 1950s, for the Fifties was an American decade, when America emerged as the great Western superpower and the defender of that individualistic materialism which seemed the only alternative to totalitarian Communism—that are coming into focus as just such another key decade. "The crucial decade", Eric F. Goldman has called it; though his "crucial" phase rightly starts in the tentative, divided, ambiguous years after VJ day, when postwar American purposes were vague and undefined, when the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan were still to come, and evolves slowly into the "high Fifties", the relative equilibrium and cohesion of the Eisenhower years before Hungary and Suez, the Beat Generation and *Sputnik*.¹

These high Fifties were shadowed by the nuclear threat and fear of war, but they also had cohesion. For the enemy was clear, external and

abhorrent, and the inward momentum of America seemed assured. It is this period of American technical knowhow, of affluence, convenience foods, large cars, and bulbous iceboxes, well-rounded personalities, of cold war and atomic anxiety, that has become the epitome of American postwar experience; and it is of course those Fifties that were to be repudiated by the next generation. For in the 1960s came the sharp oscillatory swing, the violent renunciations. The succeeding generation cast the 1950s rather in the same role that the 1930s had attached to the 1920s, that of an unheeding, materialistic, unpolitical decade. They were also to offer the radical alternative—studied conformity replaced by studied nonconformity, materialism by idealism, morals by politics, affluence by alienation, cold war by hot love, the desire to be felt over thirty by the desire to be felt under it. The portrait was one often secretly encapsulated by critics in the 1950s themselves, but a new revisionist history now became available, and it reversed the orthodoxies—conflict models replaced consensus models in the prevailing view of society.

TODAY WE ARE PAST THE PEAK of the large and outright repudiations, which are themselves receding into the historical rearview mirror; the portrait appears more complicated in times when America's role in the world is deeply in question, when the price of the politics of commitment and of withdrawal is equally apparent, when economic crisis prevails. Many of the policies and psychologies that started in the 1950s are now so irretrievably in ruins that the historical gaze is in order. Today the Fifties appear to us less abhorrent than aberrant, a phase of long-lost options, though options and forms of consciousness still rooted in our contemporary psychology. Now we have the reminiscences of the war-torn survivors, catching

¹ Eric F. Goldman, *The Crucial Decade—And After* (New York, Vintage Books, 1960).

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the decade in that crossfire of rejection and nostalgia we direct at the past times which we, as men grown wise and weary with history, wish both to deny and to remember. The vogue for replay is among us, evident in movies and in coffee table books;² now it is entering into yet more solemn areas. Two of the most interesting novels of last year, Philip Roth's *My Life As a Man* and Joseph Heller's *Something Happened*, are fables about psyches that were made then; and now one of the central novels of that era, Lionel Trilling's *The Middle of the Journey*, published in 1947, but essentially a "Fifties" book, is reissued, with a new and reminiscent introduction, for our historical inspection.³

The central fact about the Fifties was that it was a post-war decade. It followed a war that had generated exceptional social cohesion against a plain and evident enemy, Fascism; division followed, replaced by tense cohesion through the experience of cold war and growing and egalitarianising prosperity. This cohesion, which both implicated and embarrassed the intelligentsia, is patent in the titles of the books that sociologised, whether positively, negatively, or from the position of neutral observation so popular in the decade, the emerging era: titles like David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), C. Wright Mills's *White Collar* (1951), David Potter's *People of Plenty* (1954), W. H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956), J. K. Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* (1958), Daniel Bell's *The End of Ideology* (1960), demonstrate the mood and prevalent rhetoric as precisely as titles like *Life Against Death* and *One-Dimensional Man* do for ten years later. The portrait of an other-directed, bureaucratised, consumerised, suburbanised America, a compound of traditional capitalism and welfarism, but in essence the prototypical affluent modern mass-society, was of course subjected to many interpretations. But its historical significance as a model of late 20th-century evolution was widely understood both within and outside the United States. As a social order it raised many expectations and many anxieties. Edward Shils, in an essay called "The Theory of Mass Society", noted the tensions in the situation. Broad and narrow goals could easily divide, industrialism would come to seem an obstruction to individuality to people whose growing sense of individuality was based on, precisely, industrialism; the balance of individual and community was difficult to sustain. But on the whole his report was affable; he saw a society

² For example: Jay Berman, *The Fifties Book* (New York, Berkley, 1973).

³ *The Middle of the Journey*. By LIONEL TRILLING, with a new introduction by the author. Secker & Warburg, £3.75.

which was a complex interlocking of values and satisfactions, a social order in which the population stood in closer affinity to the centre than ever before, where there was an efflorescence both of sensation and sensibility, where life had become more humane and civil. Modern mass-communication, mass-consumption society *worked*. "The historical uniqueness of modern society, notably in its latter day phases", he said, "is its incorporation of the mass into the moral order of its society. . . ."⁴ But there were also, from several standpoints, hostile versions. Philip Selznick virtually reversed the portrait: modern mass man was in society but not of it, cultural élites were absent, and values and assents not generated, community had become a superficial adherence to stereotyped values, artificial relationships replaced real ones, and an essential instability reigned.⁵

This cohesion and its mass-character also brought to issue the role of the intellectuals; especially, of course, among the intellectuals themselves. In the famous *Partisan Review* symposium of 1952, "Our Country and Our Culture",⁶ a fairly positive reading predominated, clearly conditioned by the feeling that the reformist and progressive intent of New Deal America had been largely fulfilled and that the intellectuals were closer to power and influence than before. But this situation generated its own anxieties. Lionel Trilling noted the growing power and influence of intellectuals, in the arts as well as the sciences, and saw a nation opening itself to the pressures of mind; he felt that the liberal intellectual was taking a purchase in American life, the critical spirit predominating in affairs, the American mind realising itself.⁷ But Irving Howe, in an essay called "This Age of Conformity", which gave another title to the decade, disagreed. Arguing that Schumpeter's picture of the intellectual as inherently alienated had become "comically wrong", he said:

Far from creating and subsidising unrest, capitalism in its most recent stage has found an honoured place for the intellectuals; and the intellectuals, far from thinking of themselves as a desperate "opposition", have been enjoying a return to the bosom of the nation. . . . We have all, even the handful who still try to retain a glower of criticism, become responsible and moderate. And tame.

⁴ Edward Shils, "The Theory of Mass Society" (1962), reprinted in Philip Olson (ed.), *America as a Mass Society* (London, Collier-Macmillan, 1963).

⁵ Philip Selznick, "Institutional Vulnerability in Mass Society" (1951); reprinted in *America as a Mass Society*.

⁶ "Our Country and Our Culture", *Partisan Review* (three issues, 1952); reprinted as *America and the Intellectuals* (New York, Partisan Review).

⁷ Lionel Trilling, "The Situation of the American Intellectual at the Present Time", *America and the Intellectuals*; reprinted in expanded form in *A Gathering of Fugitives* (Boston, Beacon, 1956).

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Howe, like Trilling, sees an age of liberalism, but a liberalism that dissipates the critical role of the intelligentsia. He idealises the Bohemian avant-garde idea of the 1920s, the politically radical intelligentsia of the 1930s, and perhaps confuses both too easily with the standpoint of sceptical humanism. His portrait of the Fifties is therefore of an intellectual sector won over by weariness, living in an age of defeat and seeking to withdraw from "the bloodied arena of historical action and choice." The main processes he sees at work are social and intellectual bureaucratisation, which grants the intellectual a secure social place but limits his freedom and critical function. Intellectuality becomes not a vocation but a profession. The infection touches the literary sphere too; the professional writer is replaced by the professional academic critic, whose own concern is with orthodoxy, tradition, original sin, and high formalism; the experimental avant-garde is disappearing in writing, and "moral musings" are the order of the day.⁸

THE POSTWAR PERIOD did indeed see the expansion of intellectual power in many areas; and the price was paid in others. But many of these developments derived directly from the movement of intellectuals away from the Communist sympathies of the 1930s, and the problems of realignment in new historical circumstances. Even more than the English Fifties, the American Fifties revealed a politics, a political concern, and an attempt at intellectual rediscovery. The problems and antitheses of the Thirties produced a new mood, which Leslie Fiedler characterised as "an end to innocence"; intellectual self-scepticism became of growing importance. And persistently the issues of the Thirties surfaced again and dominated the intellectual debates of the 1950s, demanding replay; nowhere more importantly than in the Hiss case. One result of this realignment was a movement from politics toward literature, the new focus of liberalism; but it was a movement in which the political awarenesses remained embodied, as is evident in the career of *Partisan Review* as a magazine, and also in Lionel Trilling's influential book *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), which explores this movement. There Trilling remarked on the fact that literature and politics were deeply intertwined, that the word "liberal" is of primarily political import, and yet that it cries for the critical spirit, the spirit that sees life in its depths and intensities of experience; here literature was

⁸ Irving Howe, "This Age of Conformity", *America and the Intellectuals*.

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crucial. For it is this critical liberalism that literature reveals, above all in its engrained instinct towards "moral realism", its concern with passing beyond ideology to actuality, its concern with contingency and possibility.

THE THIRTIES had been an era of political and historicist concern; the question for the Fifties was what might become of it. In the new preface he has written for *The Middle of the Journey*, Trilling refers very explicitly to this intellectual situation. In particular he notes the nullifying effect that the flirtation with communism had had on American intellectuals forged in the 1930s, people who—even when they had withdrawn from involvement at various points, but most conclusively with the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939—subsequently found it hard to sustain a political life, to return to the variety of opinions, and the compromises, out of which it is made. They were left with "an ever more imperious and bitter refusal to consent to the conditioned nature of human existence." And such is the case with the Crooms in the novel; they are model portraits of people who sacrifice to process and necessity as force, and who reject or ignore the moral contemplation of being and death. Trilling himself finds his answers somewhere in the middle of things—this side of apocalyptic history, this side of the existential abyss, yet still in history and the complexities of a real and changing world. Thus the "moral musings" of the 1950s, which Howe condemns as an apostasy from serious intellectual activity, were an attempt not so much to discard politics as to bring them under the sway of experience, diurnality, out of historicism and ideology. They served, then, the necessary function not of discarding historical awareness, but of seeing history as itself conditioned by the needs of scruple and realism.

THE PROBLEM OF appropriate postures of dissent, in a world in which both doctrinaire politics and utter conformity seem equally abhorrent, is the theme running through the Fifties. In more local form, it is the tension between politics and morals, and these matters become a persistent presence in the literature of the decade, from the 1940s through to the turn into the 1950s. In the intellectual life of the Fifties, as Trilling suggests, literature came to play a growingly significant part: especially fiction, a mode well-fitted to exploring a detailed politics of experience. It was in fiction a highly creative decade, when Bellow, Malamud, Mailer, Salinger, Updike and Roth all emerged into reputation, and it developed a distinct timbre. We are sometimes told by critics that the dominant tone

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was one of a disillusioned nihilism, that we have a literature either of dissent and nonconformity, or of absurdity. Neither judgment is quite fully true. The new American novelists were, much more than their English contemporaries, affected by the intellectual impact of existentialism and absurdism, more profoundly aware of the problems of representing social experience and the interactions of self and society. But they also avoided the extremities of modernism and post-modernism, and asserted, in fact, a qualified and selective realism, a direct moral concern.

"HE HAD ASKED HIMSELF a question I still would like answered, namely, 'How should a good man live; what ought he to do?'" This is Joseph, the central figure of Saul Bellow's *Dangling Man*, published in 1944, recalling his own self-demands; his questions go on ringing through many of the writings of the postwar generation of writers. Joseph is an absurdist hero, a marginal man; he is experiencing a withdrawal from the life around him, and seeking a definition of selfhood. But he lives in an historical world; "we have history to answer to", he notes; he recognises that it is through history that we find not only our grandeur but our immoderate hatreds and feelings of violence. His political passions have expired, and he is a renegade from the party. Now he lives in a wartime, urban America, where personal and historical aspirations are irrelevant, and where, in the mass society, the relationship of man to environment is distorted. He feels existential despair, and at the end of the book he cancels his freedom by joining the army, crying "Long live regimentation." His gesture is ambiguous, self-nullifying, yet also part of his search for civility, common humanity. And this kernel of civil concern carries on into Bellow's later books. *The Victim* (1947), his next one, is a novel about the nature of moral responsibility in a society where there appears to be none, the world of the naturalist jungle of New York City, hot, lonely, filled with impersonal and mechanical jostle. Yet the metaphysical coup of the novel is to establish a connection, a thread of remote responsibility, between Leventhal, the Jewish hero, and Allbee, the Gentile whom he has accidentally dislodged, and so to establish a serious dignity for man. Bellow explores absurdity, but reaches beyond it; the moral need transcends historical and social determinants. This theme expands into many postwar novels—Malamud's *The Assistant*, for example—creating among other things a stylistic balance between absurdism and realism. It is a technical posture that was, for many of the writers who secured it, to become, later, very hard to maintain, but it secures a delicate balance between historicism

and morality that is a significant feature of the decade. In the Fifties, the language of moral consent was still a very possible style.

IF *DANGLING MAN* offers, in fact, an invaluable starting point for raising questions about some of the forms and preoccupations that shape the evolution of the postwar novel, there is no doubt that *The Middle of the Journey*, published three years later, does so too. While Trilling's novel lacks Bellow's metaphysical intensity and his formal inventiveness, it offers through its more direct realism a record of the evolution of the moral mind of the intelligentsia. Very much a new version of the liberal humanist novel that goes back to E. M. Forster and the English 19th century, it tackles political life from the standpoint of the moral imperatives that take us into them. In this way it is also a novel of ideas, a novel about intellectuals and an intellectual's novel; it has the shape of a dialectical mental argument as well as that of a moral experience. And then, because it is Trilling's assumption that for a particular generation questions of moral responsibility and personal moral growth were directed into radical politics, it is also a political novel. If there is a certain stiffness and aridity in the result, if it is not quite a great novel, it is certainly a very good one—good enough for us seriously to regret the fact that, save for a few admirable short stories, Trilling's fictional talents were not redeployed after he turned to the path of criticism for his main work.

The novel is one that, because of its political and moral preoccupations, measures itself against familiar reality and history, and the connections men make with them. Indeed Trilling now presents it to us very explicitly as an historical text; it is, he tells us in his introduction, a book "committed to history", written

'to draw out some of the moral and intellectual implications of the powerful attraction to Communism felt by a considerable part of the American intellectual class during the Thirties and Forties.'

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mortality and the deaths we may bring to others. These figures want to take options on history; indeed the book is concerned with another History, History in its Marxist sense, History as that long corridor into the revolutionary future, commanding, brooking no opposition. This is the corridor in which the central character, John Laskell, sees his friend Gifford Maxim, the committed revolutionary, standing symbolically, flanked by the twin images of suffering and power. And when Maxim breaks with the Party, and so loses his historical power, becomes "merely personal", the main problems of allegiance and responsibility in the novel begin.

THIS CRISIS OF APOSTASY coincides with another; John Laskell, the serious liberal idealist, a man with a grip on reality and the future, reaches the dark wood in the middle of life's journey. He is struck down by a child's disease, scarlet fever, comes close to death, and finds himself obsessed with his own mortality, the relation of his own life to that of the world. Maxim's break with the party also threatens his hopeful radicalism further. For Maxim reveals that he has been part of a terrorist undercover operation; he also claims that the conspiracy will now try to engineer his death. Laskell dismisses this as an illusion; his Communist and fellow-travelling friends are "gentle people." Such people are the Crooms, Arthur and Nancy, old friends who have helped Laskell through his illness, and whom he now goes to visit in the country for his convalescence. They are generous, helpful, life-affirming, future-facing. But now his relationship with them seems strained, and he realises that this is partly because they find it hard to face Laskell's recent closeness to death; having their eyes on the future, they, and especially Nancy, find death "politically reactionary." Their vision has a truth; Laskell has passed through a period of withdrawal from affairs, been tempted away from historical reality. But as the moral gap widens between Laskell and Nancy Croom, he finds himself beginning to believe Gifford's story, and senses an essential unconcern in her:

He had seen in Nancy a passion of the mind and will so pure that, as it swept through her, she could not believe that anything that opposed it required consideration.

Later, Laskell is very obliquely implicated in the sudden death of a child. The bond of common mortality grows clearer to him; he also has to face the question of his own responsibility and guilt. But the novel is a novel of ideas, and so out of such experience moral ideas must come. At the end of the book Laskell suffers a temptation. On the one hand Nancy tries to claim him for the theory of social guilt, for the belief that false

consciousness and wrong social conditions are the source of wrong, and that the one crime is to be the enemy of the future; on the other, Maxim, now a Christian, puts to him the notion of universal mortality and universal guilt, absolved only by mercy. Laskell sees that in a sense the two claims are two modern essences which divide the world between them and contend for power. But he carefully seeks out a middle path between the notion of absolute responsibility and absolute freedom from responsibility. At the end of the book he senses his isolation and departs, taking with him his luggage, including the fishing creel whose intractable shape and refusal to fit into his baggage stand as a quiet emblem of the incompleteness of mental system.

IT IS INDEED A VERY GOOD NOVEL, and its political theme is treated with the greatest delicacy and moral precision. But in inviting us to look at it with the historical gaze, Trilling may well tempt us to see it as a book lacking in a prime sense of political reality. Many people now have learned to grant, even to delight in, the inhumanity and violence of the revolutionary aim, which Trilling so clearly questions. He also associates that questioning with the defection of intellectuals from Communism. There are, of course, other explanations for that defection, and there is also the classic accusation so often made against liberalism, that it sacrifices necessity to scruple. It's an accusation that works two ways, goes back against the accusers. But in granting an historical position for the book Trilling takes the risk of placing historically that liberalism, that liberal view and liberal form, itself. And this risk is further increased by another aspect of the introduction, for Trilling also indicates what has in fact long been rumoured, that history enters the book in a very direct way.

In 1950, three years after the book, Alger Hiss was tried and convicted of perjury after denying he had transmitted state secrets to Russia in the 1930s: his accuser was an ex-Party member, Whittaker Chambers. Trilling had known Chambers at Columbia in the 1930s, during his own association with Communism. He had also been at a party where Chambers had declared—like Gifford Maxim in the novel—his undercover role in the Party, and his present need for visibility as a protection against assassination. Trilling, reporting this, notes that this could have been paranoia or fantasy, also a crux in the novel; but in a sense the novel itself precisely gives Maxim and his view of the Party that visibility Chambers needed. Trilling explores this dimension of the novel in frank detail, explaining that Chambers directly influenced both the creation of

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Maxim and then, as a result, the total direction of the book, which changed from *nouvelle* to novel as Maxim came in. He is a remarkably successful character, and generates much of the depth of the book; but also an element of potential fantasy in it. We may never know whether Chambers' accusations against the Party were truth or paranoia; they are certainly not beyond belief.

But Trilling explicitly acknowledges Chambers as a man of "magnanimous intention", if with certain character flaws; he notes that Chambers has been falsely associated with Richard Nixon in the public mind, and Chambers and those who supported him have suffered hostility. What perhaps is unfortunate is that the Hiss-Chambers issue still retains something of the air of an historical open question. And Trilling, having superbly fictionalised his book, now seems to unfictionalise it, even to simplify it (the introduction lacks the moral density of the text), and to risk its fate against what might emerge in the future. The gesture has itself a liberal integrity, but a narrowing impulse; one can respect the gesture and yet fear that it places the novel in too narrow a context. For what we know, from Trilling himself, is that the liberal mind does have its own narrowness of gaze, its own capacity to accept deceptions.

HAPPILY, OF COURSE, we have a novel about that too, in Mary McCarthy's admirable satirical comedy *The Groves of Academe* (1952). The novel is set in the 1950s, in the period of the *other* McCarthy, amid the liberal pastoral groves of Jocelyn College, an advanced academic community in which high moral fairmindedness prevails. The novel transforms the situation of Maxim, the situation of dangerous apostasy from Communism, from solemnity into farce. The central character does not tell the prevailing Fifties falsehood, which is that he was not a Party member when in fact he was. Threatened with being fired for inefficiency, he tells the reverse lie, that he was a Party member when in fact he was

not. He knows, of course, his constituency; the liberal faculty members immediately rally to his defence; fair-minded souls, the only sin they cannot imagine, and when they learn it cannot forgive, is that a man may act not out of principle or belief but out of simple self-interest. As Mary McCarthy noted in her earlier novel, *The Oasis*, the wicked are indeed a source of considerable embarrassment. But in fact Hen Mulcahy, the man who saves his skin, is a product of the new intellectual environment of the 1950s, when the political was replaced by a new pluralism and a fascination with moral, analogical and mythic modes of discourse. Henry lives out a fiction, and he lives it out out of self-interest, but also for others. He fulfils their needs, becomes a focus for their moral scruple, their desire to serve, their wish to be more than simple teachers in a small college, but actors on the stage of modern history. His gift is to perform in all the prevailing intellectual modes. A Dostoevskyan hero to the Dostoevskyians, a Buberite hero to the Buberites, he is the master-plotter in a conspiracy of self-invention, and the orchestrator of all the intellectual tensions and delusions of the college.

So we follow his plots, and at the end of the book, when Henry is known for a moral leper, we realise that, as the snake in the arcadian academic groves, he has had a real role to play in exposing liberal innocence. *Groves of Academe* gives us, of course, a very detached view of the Fifties and its preoccupations, though it is also itself a very Fifties novel. The book is handled from the distance of satirical privilege, and the writer's perception consorts with that of Henry, the rogue-hero; the moral gesture is usually self-interest in one of its guises. But the virtues of the gesture carry their weight; Henry ends the book an odious man, a demagogue and a danger, while the liberals have at least lived out of concern and generated compassion and a kind of responsibility.

Mary McCarthy's is a cold eye, but it is cast with an element of forgiveness; there is a virtuousness of self-delusion, and it is for this reason that the book takes its place in the spirit of the decade rather than standing utterly outside it.

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college literature courses. . . . Perhaps if I had not fallen so in love with these complicated fictions of moral anguish, I would never have . . . arrived at what seemed to me the only 'honourable' decision for a young man as morally 'serious' as myself."

So says Peter Tarnopol, the central character of Philip Roth's *My Life as a Man*,⁹ which catches the Fifties in a rather broader gaze. For in the Fifties Tarnopol has begun to write, but also, for such literary reasons, wanting intractability and a severely moral attitude, he has made an absurd and disastrous marriage. The marriage ends in disaster. The fictional result is a withdrawal from the fiction of moral intractability, through two "useful fictions" which begin to tell the story, into a final confessional cry which has become an influential form of expression in Roth's recent work and that of many other writers. The "useful fictions" dissolve toward the accuracy of confessional fact; the moral discourse crumbles; the aesthetic distance diminishes, and the book itself becomes not an art form but an attempt to transcend an art form, though it is a portrait of controlled collapse. "Literature got me into this and literature is gonna have to get me out", says Tarnopol, but it is literature as confession and exposure and therapy that is needed.

THE MORAL NOVEL of the Fifties no longer seems a prevalent, perhaps not even a possible form. Even Bernard Malamud's most recent work, *The Tenants*, which poses again the moral question of the bonds that tie two men, a Jewish writer and a Black writer, ends in a scream of language and the destruction of a manuscript. In the works of Norman Mailer, history is no longer in tension with morals; the true act of consciousness is risky immersion in history, and the traditional formal novel, the work of craft and shape, is sacrificed to more open forms of expression. Bellow's most recent novel, *Mr Sammler's Planet*, casts a colder eye than ever before, the view from scepticism and withdrawal, as history seems to transform consciousness beyond the conventional terms of our inter-human, planetary existence; and the new novel of today, phenomenological rather than moral, flat semiotic text rather than an artefact worked by morals and craft, represents an explicit reaction against the humanism of established fiction. We are out of the Fifties, stylistically and emotionally; but we have not entirely forgotten them, any more than the Fifties could forget the Thirties, and for the same reason—because we cannot afford to.

⁹ *My Life as a Man*. By PHILIP ROTH. Jonathan Cape, £2.95.

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A Grid of Codes

Views of Structuralism—By BERNARD BERGONZI

A FORMER PUPIL, now doing research in another university, writes to me in praise of Foucault and Barthes and speaks dismissively of the "Leavisite school." "I get very angry", she says, "at the closed minds of people who assume places like this have such closed minds—as though we're spending our time discussing the moral development of Jane Eyre, or mindlessly reading Lawrence all the time, and have no time for language, for 'the word', itself." Only the young and very intelligent can muster quite such purity of scorn, and it would be easy to discount it as the result of a passing enthusiasm. Not all the most able students of literature respond so warmly to French ideas. But an increasing number do, and are likely to in the future, despite the warnings in George Watson's recent splendid polemic in these pages.¹ In the end, the implications of that drab old maxim, "Be neither the first to accept change nor the last to resist it", have to be accepted. Teachers of Eng.Lit. may want to pick up some of these new notions, if only for the same practical reason that dedicated teachers in comprehensive schools watch mindless television programmes and listen to pop songs—so as to know what their pupils are talking about.

Some idea of the change involved is apparent in several recent books of criticism and literary theory; none of them, as it happens, by an Englishman. (Mr Culler, though now a fellow of Brasenose, began his education at Harvard and I assume that he is at best an Anglo-American.) Not all the authors would accept the Structuralist label. Indeed, Harold Bloom, though familiar with Structuralist ideas, is at pains to dissociate himself from them. Yet his conviction that poems are necessarily about other poems is closer to Structuralism than it is to our usual English ways of thinking about literature.

Josephine Miles, too, belongs to a different tradition; in fact, her method of relating linguistics to the reading of literature is very much her own. Even so, early in her book she makes a casual but precise use of Saussure's term, *langue*; the distinction between *langue*—all possible resources of a given language—and *parole*—the applications of it in a particular utterance—lies at the foundation of Structuralism and recurs throughout these books. All of them are pre-occupied with language, with "the word" itself.

MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY may or may not have been a Structuralist, though he admired Saussure and wrote a book on Signs; that particular argument can be left to the faithful. Merleau-Ponty belonged to an earlier phase of French intellectual life, to the late Forties and Fifties, when he and Sartre and Camus were arguing about Existentialism and Marxism and committed literature. *The Prose of the World*² is a work dating from the early Fifties, left incomplete and unrevised when Merleau-Ponty died in 1961. It seems to have been originally written as a response to Sartre's *What is Literature?*, and shows a similar passion and commitment and obscurity. And it prompts the same kind of question: when did the proud boast, "Whatever is not clear is not French", cease to be true? (Historically, I suppose, at whatever moment the French started absorbing German philosophy.) Merleau-Ponty's way of introducing concepts as if their meaning was perfectly clear and then letting them dance and breed and multiply is very disconcerting to the English reader, who is likely to have trouble in deciding what, really, is being said.

Evidently, though, below the cloudy surface of Merleau-Ponty's prose a lot of thinking was going on about the nature of language; his main interest in this book was literary language but he also discusses the languages of painting and of mathematics. What emerges is a group of ideas that both relate Merleau-Ponty to the later Structuralists and separate him from them. Like

¹ George Watson, "Old Furniture & 'Nouvelle Critique'", *ENCOUNTER*, February 1975.

² *The Prose of the World*. By MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY. Translated by JOHN O'NEILL. Heinemann, £2.50.

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them he sees the world as made by language, though they might prefer to call it a grid of codes. In so far as the world is a human world, shot through with meanings and significances, then it is language that makes it so. Language both expresses individual meanings, as in particular literary works, and provides a medium that transcends them. An English reader is likely to feel that these points are fairly familiar anyway, having being made in our own culture by the later Wittgenstein; just as Merleau-Ponty's ideas about painting recall Gombrich. His particular emphasis is on meaning as the expression of a unique self, and on communication as inter-subjectivity. It is here, in his profound humanism, that Merleau-Ponty seems most removed from the chilly hermeticism of the Structuralists, for whom human beings exist only as the points of intersection of the multiple codes that make up the world. The Structuralists, too, are interested in language only as something written, as *écriture*, presumably because it can then seem more plausibly anonymous. Merleau-Ponty, however, resembles such anglophone writers as Walter Ong and Marshall McLuhan in emphasising the primal importance of speech:

Speech is not a means in the service of an external end. It contains its own ebbing, its own rule of usage and vision of the world, the way a gesture reveals the whole truth about a man.

WITH PIERRE GUIRAUD'S *Semiology*³ we are well within the camp of latter-day Structuralism, the two names meaning much the same thing. Frank Kermode contributes a brief and remarkably cool introduction. He acknowledges that Semiology has now a strong theoretical foundation but adds that there "is still a good deal of reasonable doubt about its use at the present stage of its development in the analysis of the arts, including literature." Since I can remember Professor Kermode, back in 1968, telling a conference on the novel that Structuralism represented the way ahead I find this grave and telling testimony. He adds that on the polarity of "logical" and "affective" language M. Guiraud is trailing behind the I. A. Richards of the Twenties, and that he was anticipated on the literary use of Jungian archetypes by Maud Bodkin in the Thirties: "this is the part of M. Guiraud's book which will seem to the English reader least impressive as to both novelty and probability." But he does praise M. Guiraud for being "as simple as

³ *Semiology*. By PIERRE GUIRAUD. Translated by GEORGE GROSS. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £2.95, paper £1.25; \$9.25, paper \$3.75.

possible", and this, I am afraid, is unjustified praise. Compared with the cloudiness of Merleau-Ponty, M. Guiraud's short introductory book does manifest a kind of terse directness, but in fact it conveys very little to the English reader who needs help in mastering an unfamiliar mode of thought. M. Guiraud is like a confident knowledgeable lecturer who rattles off information at top speed without pause or recapitulation and who is unaware that he has long since left his audience behind. His book seems to me quite useless for an English audience and not worth the trouble of translating. Nor is it helped by the characteristically Structuralistic indulgence in little charts and diagrams that look as if they will make everything clear but usually prove unintelligible.

JONATHAN CULLER's *Structuralist Poetics*⁴ and Roland Barthes' *S/Z* are another matter. These are important books, or should one say texts, which complement each other effectively and whose appearance at the same time is a happy accident of publishing. Mr Culler, writing about the literary uses of Structuralism for an English audience, is monumentally well informed, and though parts of his book make tough reading one is kept going by the sense (which one tends not to have in translations from the French) that each sentence does actually mean something. He shows himself interestingly divided between a conviction of the importance of Structuralism and a deep scepticism about many of its claims and supposed achievements. This division imposes a rather elaborate strategy on his book. His opening chapters are devoted to a whole series of quiet demolitions: simplistic attempts to apply linguistic models directly to the analysis of literature; Barthes on fashion; Lévi-Strauss on myth; Jakobson on poems by Baudelaire and Shakespeare. All these are disposed of, and there is more of the same near the end of the book, when he devotes a severe chapter to the ultra-Structuralists of the *Tel Quel* group.

In his middle chapters he develops his own interpretation of Structuralism, which might be crudely summarised in a series of propositions, all of them fairly challenging to an anglophone reader of Leavisite or New Critical leanings. It is more important, he says, to establish a generally valid poetics than to go on proliferating interpretations of individual texts. Don't ask what a poem is, ask how to read it. Reading is not a

⁴ *Structuralist Poetics*. By JONATHAN CULLER. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £5.50, paper £2.75, Cornell University Press, \$10.00.

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passive process but a very active one, which in the course of "making sense" of a text necessarily leads to what is sometimes disapprovingly called "reading in" meanings. The literary uses of language are quite different from other uses. In literature one stays for as long as possible with the "play of the text", and avoids what is called "premature foreclosure" or moving too soon from the word to the world. (The sexual overtones of that last proposition are scarcely an accident, for one of the true novelties of Structuralist poetics is its emphasis on a hedonistic rather than a cognitive or moralistic approach to literature.) Mr Culler quotes Valéry to the effect that "every work is the work of many things besides an author": literary texts are in some degree the productions of language, of other literature, of the prevailing conditions in the culture. Unlike the ultra-Structuralists, Culler does not want wholly to banish the author, who is permitted to retain a modest place alongside all the other factors that go to produce literature. Culler reinforces a remark I made in these pages last year about the "end of critical innocence."⁵ As he insists, reading a text means much more than just studying "the words on the page" and perhaps speculating about the author's state of mind when he wrote it. The reader will have to acquaint himself with the codes and conventions that helped to produce it, if he is to have any hope of reading it effectively. All of which has interesting, though perhaps disturbing, implications for the teaching of literature.

STRUCTURALIST POETICS is a highly intelligent book, which advances even the most contentious propositions with moderation and reasonableness. It provokes one to think hard about the point and purpose of criticism, though it is very vulnerable in many of its assumptions. Culler needs to do much more to justify his conviction that literature is totally unlike other ways of using language, a point on which he has already been pressed by David Lodge.⁶ And the assumption that literature is only interesting when it is *written, écriture*, flies in the face of too many cultural facts. This is, after all, an age that has seen a marked revival of sung and spoken poetry. But as Culler acknowledges, the Structuralists have so far shown very little interest in poetry. This is odd, because their real founding father, whatever the debt to Saussure, is surely Mallarmé, who made heroic attempts to separate the word

⁵ Bernard Bergonzi, "Foregrounding and Such", *ENCOUNTER*, April 1974.

⁶ David Lodge, "Opinion", *The New Review*, February 1975.

from the world. A fundamental difference between French and English ways of thinking about poetry is that whereas they had Mallarmé we had Wordsworth, who wanted to write poems about "incidents and situations from common life" in "a selection of language really used by men." The English want poems, like words, to mean something, whatever the attractions of the symbolist claim that "a poem should not mean but be." The Structuralists, who are most interested in fiction, move in the opposite direction by implying that "a novel should not mean but be."

AND SO TO ROLAND BARTHES, whose *S/Z*⁷ has long been talked about as the great *chef d'oeuvre* of Structuralist criticism, and is discussed with qualified respect by Jonathan Culler. Barthes analyses in detail a story by Balzac called *Sarrasine*, which is printed as an appendix to the book. Just how much detail can be gauged from the fact that whereas the text of *Sarrasine* occupies 34 pages, Barthes' commentary and appendices take up over 230. He has accomplished a systematic model reading which takes account of every word in the text, believing that everything must be looked at and no one part is more important than any other, unlike the Anglo-Americans who are inclined to reduce texts to a set of pre-selected "key passages."

Sarrasine is a creepy, melodramatic story about a young French sculptor, Sarrasine, who falls in love with a beautiful actress, Zambinella, only to discover, finally, that "she" is a castrato. It's not a tale of great literary distinction, or even credibility, but Barthes finds it packed with the binary oppositions that are meat and drink to the working Structuralist: male/female, age/youth, beauty/ugliness, heat/cold, and many more. As an intellectual performance *S/Z* is quite dazzling, but, as George Watson has said, it tells one more about the state of Barthes' mind than about what Balzac actually wrote. It would be Barthes' contention, though, that all Balzac did was to provide an empty space called "*Sarrasine*" waiting for "structuration", when the reader "reads in" as many meanings as he can, none of them being more "right" than any other. This is an interesting process but it's not what we call literary criticism. Barthes seems to me more immediately useful in an earlier less self-contained book, *Mythologies*, where he subjects the artifacts of popular culture to an illuminating semiological analysis. *S/Z* is more brilliant but comparatively useless: it stays in the mind like a piece of beautiful advanced technology or an object in a

⁷ *S/Z*. By ROLAND BARTHES. Translated by RICHARD MILLER. Jonathan Cape, £4.50; Hill & Wang, \$8.95.

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science fiction film, where the various codes into which Barthes divides the text weave moving patterns round each other like endless bands of coloured light.

Barthes' method brings together the traditional and the smartly modern, in a curious combination of classical or Renaissance rhetoric, a simplistic application of psychoanalysis, and terms and devices drawn from such areas as cybernetics and computer science. It is, I think, a strictly inimitable mixture. Even if it were not, it would be quite impractical to analyse a full-length novel in the same exhaustive way. Still, it can offer non-Structuralists valuable hints about reading fictional texts more attentively.

HAROLD BLOOM⁸ HAS VARIOUS THINGS in common with Barthes: conspicuous cleverness, an aloof mandarin tone, and a method which combines traditional rhetoric and psychoanalysis. Indeed, they both have a weakness for the dafter side of Freud. Barthes follows Freud in asserting that the origin of weaving lay in the woman's attempt to braid her pubic hairs into a penis, and Bloom approvingly quotes Freud to the effect that writing—"which consists in allowing a fluid to flow out from a tube upon a piece of white paper"

—has acquired the symbolic meaning of coitus. Bloom advances a complicated theory about the nature of poetry. A young poet begins by imitating another poem, which is his symbolic father: "To live, the poet must *misinterpret* the father, by the crucial act of misprision, which is the re-writing of the father." There follows a suggestion that the tropes and metaphors of poetry arise from anxiety and repressions based in this primal act of misprision. In due course, Mr Bloom offers some examples of what he is on about. He shows the way Homer and Virgil and Ovid and Spenser and Tasso live on in *Paradise Lost*; but this is scarcely new ground. When he tries to demonstrate the similar presence of Milton's "Lycidas" in Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode" he is very much less convincing. *A Map of Misreading* is one of those critical books that are really a kind of fiction, and I have to say that I didn't follow the story very well. The lack of notes and index may well be intended to put off the reader who just wants to use or consult the book, rather than curl up with it in a bedazzled way. Like *S/Z*, Mr Bloom's book may, in the end, tell us more about its author's mind than about literature. And mind for mind, Barthes' seems to me more powerful, more ingenious, less ostentatious and more elegant in its operations.

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⁸ *A Map of Misreading*. By HAROLD BLOOM. Oxford University Press, £5.25, \$8.95.

⁹ *Poetry and Change*. By JOSEPHINE MILES. University of California Press, \$10.00, £5.90.

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DENT

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Charlotte Brontë & her Critics—BY LAURENCE LERNER

TWO THINGS were central to Charlotte Brontë, the need for love and an awareness of the difficulties of woman's lot. Perhaps we would not know about the first if she had never written novels: her advice to Ellen Nussey ("no young lady should fall in love, till the offer has been made, accepted—the marriage ceremony performed and the first half year of wedded life has passed away") sounds like the controlled staidness of a young ladies' manual, though we know, as no doubt Miss Nussey did too, that she is writing against her own temperament (and the remark surely owes some of its poise to this). Her burning views on the treatment of women do however emerge from her correspondence; she wrote to her publisher in 1849, "Something like a hope and a motive sustains me still. I wish all your daughters—I wish every woman in England had also a hope and a motive. Alas! there are many old maids who have neither." She felt with peculiar bitterness that society imposed an impossible situation on old maids, preparing them for nothing except a marriage they were quite likely not to make, and then expecting them gladly to embrace a life that brought only loneliness and contempt. There is an interesting chapter in *Shirley* in which the heroine reflects bitterly on the situation of old maids who "have no earthly employment but household work and sewing, no earthly pleasure but an unprofitable visiting, and no hope, in all their life to come, of anything better." This is clearly not only the heroine but also the author talking, and both the bitterness and the sarcasm belong to Charlotte herself:

What do fathers expect them to do at home? If you ask, they would answer, sew and cook. They expect them to do this, and this only, contentedly, regularly, uncomplainingly all their lives long, as if they had no germs of faculties for anything else—doctrine as reasonable to hold as it would be that the fathers have no faculties but for eating what their daughters cook, or for wearing what they sew.

So when Elizabeth Hardwick tell us¹ that "the worries that afflicted genteel, impoverished women in the 19th century can scarcely be exaggerated", she is telling us not only something true but something that Charlotte Brontë knew as well as any 20th-century liberationist. "Their condition was dishonourable, but no approval attached to their efforts to cope with it"; the

words come from the *New York Review of Books*, but they could equally have come from Hawthorne Parsonage.

Charlotte Brontë's novels are social documents, not in the pedestrian sense that they illustrate trends in 19th-century society, but in the sense of a true literary sociology that they translate these trends into certain artistic equivalents. And the artistic consequences of these two central concerns in Charlotte's nature are so different, so near to being opposites, that we can be led to seeing the concerns themselves as opposites. The need for love fits without difficulty into well-established literary conventions: it will lead to the kind of love-story that invites the reader to identify with the hero—or in this case heroine—and find vicarious emotional satisfaction in her fulfilment. This is one of the oldest of fictional patterns and though it was clear to contemporaries that Charlotte treated it in a new and more realistic way ("The democratic principle has ordered romance to descend from thrones and evacuate the palace", wrote one reviewer of *Villette*), it could be argued that this democratic principle—the ordinariness of *Jane Eyre* and *Lucy Snowe*—simply reveals more clearly than ever the basic pattern of reader-identification.

Charlotte's indignant views on the role of women, however, lead in her fiction to a realism that defies convention, to a direct presentation of what woman's situation is like that ignores or directly flouts the expectations of the ordinary novel-reader; and that, like most realism, extends the traditional subject matter of fiction. If in some ways Charlotte is a deeply traditional story-teller, in others she is concerned to offer us the truth as she knows it, whether or not that is what her readers expect. And it is not only literary expectations that she is prepared to defy, but also moral ones. *Jane Eyre* is a quite explicitly anti-Christian heroine, who tells that model of Christian humility, Helen Burns, "When we are struck at without a reason, we should strike back again very hard—I am sure we should." No doubt contemporary readers (especially woman readers) were ashamed of the pleasure they felt reading that.

HERE I BELIEVE is a useful framework for discussing Charlotte Brontë's work: in what ways did she develop basic literary conventions and in what ways did she ignore or defy them in

¹ *Seduction and Betrayal*. By ELIZABETH HARDWICK. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £3.95; Random House, \$6.95.

order to tell the truth about how women were treated? The interactions and variations of these in her novels are complex, and I will offer a few examples.

First, we must admit that the way to strike a revolutionary note is not necessarily to defy literary conventions: it could be to use them more violently and whole-heartedly than usual. Love as emotional release and satisfaction is old enough, but it had not previously spoken in such a defiant voice as Jane Eyre's famous speech to Rochester—

"Do you think because I am poor, obscure, plain and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong . . . I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities or even of mortal flesh:—it is my spirit that addresses your spirit."

This, as contemporaries felt, is not how a penniless governess is supposed to talk to her employer. If he'd been trying to seduce her she is allowed (in novels, anyway) to defend her virtue in such fiery language; but to defend her right to love with such an assumption of equality savours of immodesty. "Every page burns with moral Jacobinism", complained the *Christian Remembrancer*. Yet you could argue that all Charlotte is doing is taking traditional ideas seriously, and offering love as the meeting of two equal souls. Equality was supposed to be offered by the man instead of demanded by the woman, and these plain passionate heroines who demanded were seen as filled with "hunger, rebellion and rage" (the words are Matthew Arnold's).

LOVE MAY REPRESENT equality, but what of marriage? Does not the emotional satisfaction issue in accepting a highly unequal institution, so that Charlotte the crusader for treating women better is defeated, in the end, by the Charlotte who needs a man's love? This is certainly true. All Charlotte's crusading zeal was concerned with the lot of the spinster, and she has nothing to say about the injustices of marriage: the women who need to be treated better are those who have been unfortunate enough not to get what every woman needs. Patricia Beer,² with her usual good sense, realises this, and has to admit that Charlotte's fiery feminism takes second place to her need for a man. It was realised from the beginning by Thackeray, who in a brilliant and unkind passage showed that he knew that patriarchal society had nothing to fear from this intense little creature.

The poor little woman of genius! The fiery little eager brave tremulous homely-faced creature! I can read a great deal of her life as I fancy in her book,

² *Reader I Married Him*. By PATRICIA BEER. Macmillan, £4.95.

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and see that rather than have fame, rather than any other earthly good or mayhap heavenly oneshe wants some Tomkins or another to love and be in love with. But you see she is a little bit of a creature without a penny worth of good looks, thirty years old I should think, buried in the country, and eating up her own heart there, and no Tomkins will come.

I could understand any woman's fury at such condescending masculinity (though interestingly, Thackeray is here writing to a woman); but how shrewd he is, and how clearly he has anticipated Freudian views of literature as wish-fulfilment, seeing the intensity of the author's deprivation as the cause of such intense writing.

It would seem from this that when the two sides of Charlotte clash, the romantic has an easy victory over the emancipatory. This is not a wholly palatable conclusion for the feminist who admires Charlotte Brontë, and the most interesting rejection of it is the brilliantly distorted reading of *Villette* in Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*. *Villette* is one of the few Victorian novels that doesn't end in marriage, and for Kate Millett that is its great emancipatory quality. Having used Paul Emanuel to rescue Lucy from her position of slavery, Charlotte drowns him before he can marry her, so that Lucy has climbed to freedom without having to pay the normal price of marriage.

As there is no remedy to sexual politics in marriage, Lucy very logically doesn't marry. But it is also impossible for a Victorian novel to recommend a woman not to marry. So Paul suffers a quiet sea burial.

Patricia Beer will have none of this. *Villette* is a love-story, and the hint of disappointment at the end is not an oblique assertion of emancipation but a note of tragedy: "She does not rise above the lures of marriage. . . . She is an unhappy and deprived woman for the rest of her life."

It is a neat contrast between the critic who trusts the author and the critic who is palpably cleverer than the author. Patricia Beer is obviously the more balanced, but she can't really explain why Charlotte refused the happy ending, or why the result is so strangely moving. Kate Millett is obviously misreading (Lucy *does* love Paul Emanuel, deeply and convincingly) but she is in touch with something in the deeper dynamic of the novel. What neither of them really discusses is that Charlotte obviously went to a great deal of conscious trouble to disappoint the expectations of the conventional reader. For Lucy does begin what looks like an ordinary love-story, pining for the sort of handsome masculine Englishman every eager brave tremulous female is supposed to long for in life and be rewarded with in fiction.

This is Dr John, the "born victor" for whom everything in life has been a little too easy, as both author and heroine realise before the story is over.

Lucy never quite ceases to love him, even after she has fallen in love with Paul Emanuel; Thackeray (the pig!) noticed and was amused by "the author's naive confession of being in love with two men at the same time; and her readiness to fall in love at any time." The other lover is "a dark little man, . . . pungent and austere", as different as can be from the conventional hero: "a harsh apparition, with his close-shorn, black head, his broad, shallow brow, his thin cheek, his wide and quivering nostril, his thorough glance, and hurried bearing." For Kate Millett the feminist hidden in Charlotte Brontë could not allow Lucy to marry this bullying male chauvinist; but simply to say that is to ignore the grotesque comedy with which Paul Emanuel is treated, and the importance of there being two heroes instead of one. It is true that the book ends with a hint that Lucy is not going to marry Paul Emanuel; but what is much more important is that she doesn't marry Dr John. That is the real departure from convention and it is arguable that it is emancipatory: to move from a handsome "born victor", the answer to every maiden's prayer, to a vain, bullying, bigoted (Papist and anti-feminist) and yet vulnerable "apparition" is to move from the stereotypes of romance to the individuality of a particular creation, and Lucy would lose less individuality as Mme Emanuel than as Mrs Bretton.

With the rejection of marriage itself as a "patriarchal institution" in some circles of Women's Lib, we have no doubt acquired a new perspective on the traditional love story and its wedding bells. There is a kind of crude logic that says romantic love is conservative, because it teaches women to fit into existing institutions instead of breaking out of them; though it is coming close to the reductive singlemindedness that sees all distractions from the revolutionary goal in hand as cunning devices by the enemy (correct syntax, clean shirts and good cooking can all be described as ways of supporting "the system"). Such logic is not often helpful for literary criticism, and it is a mark of Kate Millett's intelligence that she is able to say things about *Villette* that are, somehow, almost there in the book.

FOR A 19TH-CENTURY anticipation of such reasoning we can turn to Harriet Martineau, who complained that "all the female characters, in all their thoughts and lives, are full of one thing, are regarded by the reader in the light of that one thought—love It is not thus in real life. There are substantial, heartfelt interests for women of all ages, and under ordinary circumstances quite apart from love." How modern this sounds, and how close in content (though not in

tone) to some of the recent exhortations to the sisters to reject romanticism because it leads to second-class citizenship.

Romance, like the rabbit at the dog track, is the illusive, fake, and never-attained reward which for the benefit and amusement of our masters keeps us running and thinking in safe circles.

Harriet Martineau saw that Charlotte wasn't on the side of liberation: rebuking her firmly, she is in a sense rebuking literature. Kate Millett wants to save Charlotte for the movement, so she finds, deep hidden in *Lucy Snowe*, a refusal to be loved by any man, an unconscious cunning that uses the man for her own ends.

There could be another way to save Charlotte for the movement: that would be to suggest that some of these substantial heartfelt interests do find their way into her novels. For after all, they are about teaching just as much as they are about love; and we can ask whether emancipation is offered in work, and whether in her implicit inarticulate way Charlotte is pointing to self-fulfilment through work.

We could start, for contrast, with *Agnes Grey* by Charlotte's sister Anne. This is the simplest imaginable version of a tension between work and love, between being a governess and finding a husband. Going as a governess often appears in 19th-century fiction as the fate worse than death from which the heroine has to be rescued by the timely arrival of the hero; and this is always more interesting if she has actually served time before the hero turns up, so that we see all the awfulness of governing, instead of getting it all in dark hints. *Agnes Grey* shows us how helplessly the governess is caught between malicious children and their indulgent parents, and how cunningly the cards are stacked against her. The more degrading her position, the better she (and we) are being prepared for rescue by marriage. Of course the position of a governess was degrading, and Anne's indignation is splendid, but all the same her book is very reactionary in its implications. It is educationally reactionary, since it attributes to children no wish to learn, and believes above all in the need for discipline; and it is reactionary on the woman question, since there is no hint that career, as well as marriage, might be fulfilling.

If Harriet Martineau is right, the same should be said of Charlotte; but at any rate the position is more complicated with her. As Patricia Beer shows very clearly, she was ambivalent, even muddled about governesses: Mrs Pryor's description of her situation as governess in *Shirley* is "fine paranoid stuff", but doesn't at all correspond to the way she was treated by Shirley. Jane Eyre too has a happy time teaching little Adele—though of course there was no family present to humiliate her, so her situation was artificially

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easy. But in *Villette* we have something more interesting, for this novel is set in a school. In many ways teaching in a school is more fulfilling—and also more of an assertion of independence—than going as a governess. In a school the teacher is part of an institution into which the pupil has to fit, instead of having to fit into the family of which the pupil is part. This gives her role more of an existence in its own right, and makes the whole activity more professional, more like a career. Not that Charlotte necessarily thought this in real life: in 1836, when she was teaching at Roe Head, she wrote an account in her journal of how she had sat all day in a dream that “showed almost in a vivid light of reality the ongoings of the infernal world.” While at the same time she had to toil “for nearly an hour with Miss Lister, Miss Marriott and Ellen Cook striving to teach them the distinction between an article and a substantive.” That is pure romanticism, in which work appears as everyday dullness, not as opportunity for self-fulfilment.

When it comes to *Villette*, however, teaching is treated as more of a feminine experience: it is probably the most interesting English novel about being a schoolteacher before Lawrence. True, Lucy is bullied and spied on by Mme Beck in ways that are comparable to how Agnes Grey is treated by the Bloomfields; but it makes a great difference that Mme Beck is a teacher too—i.e. that Lucy's struggles are within the profession. And in the accounts of how she asserts her authority in the classroom, and of the satisfaction of mastering and delivering the material, and of handling a class in a foreign language, there seems to be a sense of just those satisfactions that Harriet Martineau was looking for. Of course teaching and love are not really contrasts, to Charlotte: to Miss Martineau that was no doubt an indictment, but to us it adds to her complexity and interest: the most perceptive thing in *The Professor*, the feeble first draft of *Villette*, is its awareness of what Patricia Beer well calls “the artistic identification of sex and tuition.”

IF WE ARE CONCERNED with the social implications of 19th-century works of literature, then the most valuable critics to look at are probably the contemporaries: for though they may sometimes seem to us aesthetically unsophisticated, they did know where the books hurt. The present fashion for reprinting contemporary reviews, though it has no doubt got as much out of hand as most fashions, is basically very useful,

and Miriam Allott has done a good job on Charlotte Brontë: all the early critics I have quoted are taken from her volume.³ In conclusion, I want to turn to the two recent and stimulating studies of Charlotte's fiction, those of Patricia Beer and Terry Eagleton.

They make a good contrast. Mr Eagleton's Marxist study⁴ starts from a mapping out of theoretical positions whereas Patricia Beer is sensible, empirical and totally untheoretical. Furthermore, the issue that most concerns her (she writes on the position of women in the novels of our four great women novelists of the 19th century) is dismissed by Mr Eagleton as “relatively detached from the social fabric” of *Shirley*—meaning presumably that it isn't sufficiently seen in class terms. Stylistically too the difference between the two is enormous, and it would be easy to tell which is the poet. Patricia Beer writes with cool elegance and occasional wit, whereas the only really witty touch in Mr Eagleton's book is the cover, in which pictures of the three Brontë sisters are surmounted by a paternalistic Marx looking benevolently at home as a replacement for the Rev. Patrick. My high opinion of Patricia Beer's shrewdness and perceptiveness will, I hope, have emerged from the use I have already made of her; her limitations spring from her lack of theory, and are even connected with her good sense. One might expect that her interest in social reality would be limited; what is more surprising, and more damaging, is her failure to see a novel as an artistic whole. Her method is to take us judiciously and thoroughly through all the characters, major and minor, who illustrate each point: by granting them all a kind of ontological equality, she treats the fictional world as if it was the real world. As a result, we never get the experience of what it is actually like to read a novel. Minor characters in a novel have a kind of autonomous existence: central characters take on their identity only dynamically, in response to the pressures of the action. In the experience of reading, this is immediately clear; in the thoroughness of a critical study, it can be lost, and then the novel is reduced to a document.

Terry Eagleton tackles theory from the start: in a good-tempered but uncompromising preface he declares that pluralism is not enough. For him, Marxism is not one source of insights among many—“Mythological, psychoanalytic, theological, stylistic”—but it must claim “to shift the terrain of critical debate.” This is fighting stuff, but I am not always sure what it means. Mr Eagleton's mind is subtle and complex, and he is well able to use the insights from mythology, psychoanalysis and the rest: so that the distinction between a Marxist criticism that assimilates what the other approaches have to offer (his) and

³ *Jane Eyre and Villette. A Casebook*. Edited by MIRIAM ALLOTT. Macmillan, £1.

⁴ *Myths of Power. A Marxist Study of the Brontës*. By TERRY EAGLETON. Macmillan, £6.95.

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the pluralist criticism that uses Marxist insights (the rest of us) might simply be a matter of where we hang the labels. Certainly Mr Eagleton has social understandings to offer, but many of his best points, such as his feel for the authenticity of the prose of *Villette* as opposed to the contrived rhetorical flights of *Shirley*, or his analysis of sexual complexities linking Lucy, Dr John and Ginevra, are more or less totally independent of the Marxism.

His general point is that Charlotte Brontë explores the inter-relations between bourgeoisie and aristocracy, this social contrast appearing in her book in the form of a triadic structure, in which the protagonist is torn between a Romantic-radical and an autocratic conservative. This is quite a good description of the structure of *Jane Eyre* (Jane-Rochester-Rivers), but it is hard to see the contrast between Rochester and Rivers in class terms. *Shirley* on the other hand is clearly a novel that deals with social conflict, but in that case the triadic structure is less clear-cut. One would expect (this is of course the kind of pluralist remark Mr Eagleton objects to) that his method would yield more when applied to *Shirley* than to the other novels, and in a way this is so. True, his observation that the major protagonist of the raid on the mill, the working class, is distinguished primarily by its absence is obvious to any modern reader of *Shirley*, and has disappointed hundreds who have picked it up as a novel about the Luddites; but his discussion of *Shirley* herself ("Shirley's 'radicalism' is less a matter of doctrine than of style") relates her impact in the novel to the social forces she embodies—just the sort of insight Mr Eagleton constantly promises and seldom produces.

FINALLY, A FEW WORDS about value-judgments. Mr Eagleton is bold enough to tackle the question, to ask which Brontë novels are the best, and then relate the answer to his social interpretations. His preferences are in fact orthodox: he

thinks *Wuthering Heights* the best of all, and *Jane Eyre* the best of Charlotte's. Mine, as it happens, are not. *Villette* seems to me by far the finest Brontë novel, and I have a very lukewarm admiration for *Wuthering Heights*; further, I think Anne is notably underrated. Turning to Mr Eagleton's arguments from this vantage point of disagreement, I am struck by how ingenious they are, and how utterly unconvincing.

All Charlotte's novels, I would argue, reveal a dangerous "residue" of potentially uncontrollable emotion; and the success of a particular work depends in part on how effectively this is handled.

In *Villette* he finds a "maladjustment" between this emotion and the form of the narrative: "Lucy's intense world is partly severed from the 'objective' narrative, sealed and guarded in a realm of quiet desperation." *Jane Eyre* on the other hand "gives us a brilliantly realised study of an alienated consciousness which remains nervously alert to actual events and places." As a description of how the two books differ, this is admirable; but the value-judgment could so easily be reversed. *Jane Eyre* provides plenty of plot to correspond to and justify the heroine's anxieties and sufferings, and the result is a Gothic thriller; *Villette* makes it clear that Lucy warps and distorts the world around her, and the result is a brilliant study of a neurotic heroine. If there was more "appropriate action" there would be less of Lucy's obsessed sensibility.

There will never be agreement on the merits of the Brontë novels, because it is so difficult to find the right criteria. Whatever their literary merits, competence is not one of them: and the very fact that *Jane Eyre* has a carefully elaborated plot may be as much a point against it as in its favour. We read them for their intensity and their emotional need. "I can read a great deal of her life as I fancy in her book": Thackeray was condescending to her as a woman, but he knew that he was paying a tribute to her power. For all the clumsiness, that power is still alive today.

The Years That Are Past

On Thomas Hardy—By P. N. FURBANK

THIS BIOGRAPHY comes at the right moment, when quite a heap of materials have accumulated for a life of Thomas Hardy, and a legend or two has seeded and sprouted around them. The book, too, has the virtues you might expect from

Robert Gittings:¹ it is scholarly, perceptive and judicious, altogether skilful and professional. He has made many discoveries of his own, including one or two startling ones; and he has sifted the recent work of others with an expert sense of relevance and admirable powers of logical inference. Altogether, there is a lot that is new in this book. Robert Gittings says (I don't remember

¹ *Young Thomas Hardy*. By ROBERT GITTINGS. Heinemann, £4.95.

seeing it suggested elsewhere) that the notion that Emma was hereditarily insane was put into Hardy's head by his second wife, to protect him from the pain of believing what Emma had written about him in her diary. It is convincingly argued, and the plot sounds just like life. Again, Robert Gittings convinces us, there is a clue to *The Well-Beloved* in the fact that, over the years, Hardy fell in love with no less than three of his Sparks cousins—no doubt searching, like Jocelyn Pierston in the novel, for the same family features (his mother's? his own?). And another example of Gittings's method and shrewdness is his demonstration that Hardy's account, in the *Life*, of his dealings with Tinsley the publisher was fictitious, an attempt to improve on boring actuality. Thus, there is no doubt, the biography is a most solid achievement. And if this rest of this review is, to some extent, an attack, it is an attack on a most intelligent and rewarding book.

The nub of the attack is that nowhere in the book, so far as I can remember, does Robert Gittings actually say anything nice about Thomas Hardy—about Hardy the man, I mean; for he shows a proper warmth about the novels and poems. I am probably exaggerating, but that is the impression it leaves. The words "fair-minded" spring to one's lips, for Robert Gittings is no hagiographer and does not mince words about Hardy's shortcomings. Hardy, he says, was timid and morbidly sensitive, he was secretive and devious, he was a sado-masochist and, for long, emotionally immature; he was, in addition, a snob, keeping his humble connections dark from his fashionable friends and eventually disowning them. The judgments are passed coolly and without animus and are not intended to make Hardy out a villain. They are truly "fair-minded", except that—and it *is* puzzling—there is nothing in the other pan of the scales.

I puzzle as to the reason for this. It could be, simply, that Hardy was not a very nice man. Only I feel that I would have liked him; though it is very true I would not wish to have been married to him. Going to the other extreme in explanation, it could be the old problem afflicting biographies of writers: that the activities we admire writers for are, in the nature of things, conducted unseen, so that, though the writers may be heroes or saints in their art, they will show up poorly against a St Francis or Garibaldi, whose activities we witness.

There is another general explanation one might invoke. Most men in the public eye devote their days and nights to concealing their faults; authors, on the other hand, spend their time writing about them. Who does not know that Dickens was a hypocrite and Proust a snob? Their biographers are rather severe on the sub-

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CONTENTS

Introduction: The New Stylistics

Roger Fowler

1. The Strategy of Fusion: Dylan Thomas's Syntax
Donald C. Freeman
2. The Self-Reflexive Artefact: The Function of Mimesis in an Approach to a Theory of Value for Literature
E. L. Epstein
3. Language and the Reader: Shakespeare's Sonnet 73
Roger Fowler
4. Defining Narrative Units
Jonathan Culler
5. Analytic and Synthetic Approaches to Narrative Structure: Sherlock Holmes and 'The Sussex Vampire'
L. M. O'Toole
6. Story, Character, Setting and Narrative Modes in Galdós's *El amigo Manso*
John Rutherford
7. The Structure of Narrative Transmission
Seymour Chatman

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ject, but the tip was given them by Dickens and Proust themselves. Hardy was no exception: he wrote a comic novel, *The Hand of Ethelberta*, about a fashionable writer desperately concealing his (or rather her) humble social origins and another novel, *The Well-Beloved*, about a man so incorrigibly immature that he falls in love with the same face through three generations. Admittedly they are not very good novels; but in superior novels, such as *The Return of the Native* or *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, he studies, in Clym Yeobright and Angel Clare, deleterious tendencies that he found in his own heart, and in doing so he made them public property.

STILL, LET US TURN from general explanations to the specific criticisms that Robert Gittings makes of Hardy as a man. The one that interests me is about his attitude to his social origins. The facts, some of them brought to light for the first time by Robert Gittings, are extraordinarily interesting. When Hardy was first taken up by London literary society he felt, like his own Ethelberta, that he was nursing a secret it was dangerous to reveal. When visiting Leslie Stephen in Kensington he did not tell him that his mother had been a cook and had been brought up on parish relief, nor that his uncle John was an ordinary labourer, nor that, a few years before, he himself had been courting a lady's maid, his cousin Martha Sparks, in a nearby Kensington house and had been familiar with life below stairs. Even to his wife he probably never told these things, and he was careful to omit them, like so many other facts, from the autobiography he ghosted. It appears, too, that he may have been engaged to Tryphena Sparks and have deserted her for Emma Gifford partly for reasons of social ambition. With success, marriage, and the move to Max Gate, he tended to cut himself off from his Dorset relations. The Hardys, making their way to church at Turnworth, would

bicycle stiffly through the main street [of Puddletown] looking neither to right nor to left. Cottage doors were full of his close relations, the Hands, the Antells, and visiting Sparkses; but Hardy neither gave nor acknowledged greetings as he pedalled resolutely on with Emma.

Gittings's tone is somewhat critical here. And if I dare interpret his general view, it seems to be that social ambition did a certain harm both to Hardy's work and to his personal life. He would have done well to recognise, what the *Times* reviewer of *Far From The Madding Crowd* saw: that—to use Gittings's words—Hardy was “an essentially working-class author, of exceptional

talent, best employed with settings and people he understood at first hand.” That phrase “essentially working-class author”: I am not sure about it. “Essentially working-class”: yes, perhaps Hardy was and remained that, if you lay a lot of weight on “essentially.” But a “working-class author”? That seems to entail the idea of a working-class literature, and there was no such thing in the 19th century, or if there was Hardy didn't belong to it. It seems to be inescapable that, in that century, to become an author—or anyway the sort of author that Hardy was—one had to become a “gentleman.” Literature was then, and to some extent still is, inextricably bound up with middle-class manners and aspirations.

Robert Gittings would perhaps not disagree and merely regrets Hardy's manner of making himself a “gentleman.” But I think he slightly misinterprets the emotion that Hardy, as a returned native, brought to the rural scene. He depicts Hardy's happiness thus during the writing of *Far From The Madding Crowd*:

Hardy had returned, just like some man in a D. H. Lawrence story, to the world of his mother, a fortress against the vagaries of women. . . . As winter deepened, the hearth grew increasingly a place for folk-lore, and the legends of Melbury Osmond flowered in full superstition.

. . . he needed, as he said to Stephen in the later stages of the book, to be living on or near the spot that he was writing about. . . . Most of all he needed, in the marrow of his being, the reassurance of the familiar, the scenes and the people of his boyhood home, mother, father, brother, sisters, and the Hardy cousins down the road. . . .

Being so close to his originals in real life, Hardy had no need of literary models.

This need to live among the very scenes that he was writing about goes against one's expectations of writers, who as a rule function more like Ibsen or Joyce, who needed to put many geographic miles between themselves and the Norway or Dublin of their imagining. Nostalgia, one thought, works best at a distance. And, more generally, art proceeds by contraries, and it is because one is not something, or is no longer something, that one can shape it as art. Well, I'm inclined to think the law holds, and the fact that Hardy liked to be among the scenes he was describing is the measure of how irremediably he felt himself no longer a part of them. The whole tone of his “Wessex” novels is that of loss and distance, a loss he had suffered and a distance he had travelled; and the nearer to the evidence, the more acutely he experienced the distance. It helped him to focus it; just as, at the death of Emma, he needed to revisit the scenes of his past romance to register its full and aching pastness. Loss was always his strongest inspiration:

loss of faith, loss of physical beauty, loss of instinctive and unselfconscious life. It began in personal feeling, but he extended it to take in historical change, like the break-up of agricultural England, and even cosmic change, the expulsion from an Eden of "nescience":

*A time there was—as one may guess
And as, indeed, earth's testimonies tell—
Before the birth of consciousness,
When all went well*

("Before Life And After")

His "Wessex" was of incalculable importance for England and attached a note of poignancy and loss to the whole idea of the English countryside. In lesser writers the emotion turned narcissistic, so that for Georgian poets at the outbreak of the war—see Masfield's "August, 1914"—Hardy's England was a thing too precious and rare and perishable for foreigners to understand.

THE VERY NATURE of Hardy's writing, that strict science of natural appearances and endless inventiveness in picturesque effects, emphasises, in a way, his separateness from the rustic; it stamps him as some kind of aesthete and as closer to a Ruskin or a Hopkins than to George Eliot. However, there is a more obvious

token of this sense of separateness: I mean his treatment of his rustic "chorus." Critics speak a little vaguely about this rustic chorus as "Shakespearean", or, sometimes, as "overdone." What actually he is up to with it is really very odd, and, above all, it makes his social standpoint plain. His rustics are not just held at arm's length but removed to the other end of the universe. He is working several kinds of joke in them. He sometimes makes them pantomimic and slow-witted in a traditional way; but the main and most interesting joke is about the overturning of middle-class conventions: for instance the middle-class convention that "spiritual" values are more important than material ones, or that it is not good manners to make personal remarks. Thus the rustics pay due honour to social position and superiority, but not at all on "spiritual" grounds. A nice amoral paradox thus develops:

"Oh, 'tis true enough. I knowed the man and woman both well. Levi Everdene—that was the man's name, sure. 'Man', saith I in my hurry, but he were of a higher circle of life than that—'a was a gentleman-tailor really, worth scores of pounds. And he became a very celebrated bankrupt two or three times."

"Oh, I thought he was quite a common man!" said Joseph.

"O no, no! That man failed for heaps of money; hundreds in gold and silver."

(*Far From The Madding Crowd*, chapter 8)

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A similar paradox develops about plain speaking. Since there is no escape from appalling plain speaking in rustic society, the victims comfort themselves that their defects (in Christopher Cattle's case, in *The Return of the Native*, that of being so hideous and poor-spirited no woman will ever look at him) must, since everyone treats them as simple fact, be somehow neutral and not a matter for shame—perhaps even a kind of distinction. There is a scene which draws on this joke in *Far From The Madding Crowd*, where the bashful and religious-minded Joseph Poorgrass gets drunk and lachrymose. Gabriel Oak says: "I wish you'd show yourself a man of spirit, and not sit whining there." "Show myself a man of spirit?" protests Poorgrass.

"... Ah, well! let me take the name of drunkard humbly—let me be a man of contrite knees—let it be! I know that I always do say 'Please God' afore I do anything, from my getting up to my going down of the same, and I be willing to take as much disgrace as there is in that holy act. Hah, yes! ... But not a man of spirit? Have I ever allowed the toe of pride to be lifted against my hinder parts without groaning manfully that I question the right to do so? I inquire that query boldly?"

"We can't say that you have, Hero Poorgrass", admitted Jan.

These comic conceptions are wonderfully funny and charming, but nothing could less suggest kinship with the rustics on the author's part. Listen to this: even funnier to my mind, and even more a matter of pure liberated verbal fantasy. It is not so much Shakespearean as Firbankian or Lewis Carrollian, and it does not in the least recall "A Rural Painting of the Dutch School":

"A multiplying eye is a very bad thing", said Mark Clark.

"It always comes on when I have been in a public-house a little time", said Joseph Poorgrass meekly. "Yes; I see two of every sort, as if I were some holy man living in the times of King Noah and entering the ark. ... Y-y-y-yes," he added, becoming much affected by the picture of himself as a person thrown away, and shedding tears; "I feel too good for England: I ought to have lived in Genesis by rights, like the other men of sacrifice, and then I shouldn't have b-b-b-been called a d-d-drunkard in such a way."

MY POINT is that to have placed a gulf, and to recognise that gulf, between himself and his social origins was integral to the making of Hardy as a writer. Robert Gittings, I feel, does not give quite enough scale and weight to what Hardy went through to become an artist. Of course, one doesn't look for colourful "experiences", incest, illegitimate children and the like; and one of the excellent aspects of Gittings's book is his careful scotching of such *Providence and Mr Hardy* fantasies. Still, great art does not come out of

nothing. Robert Gittings seems to have no better explanation of Hardy's first great achievement in *Far From the Madding Crowd* than that, "Being so close to his originals in real life, Hardy had no need of literary models": as if art were no more than copying what you see. Taking this narrow view of art, Gittings is forced into holding that *Far From The Madding Crowd*, fine as it is, is after all rather a tame production: "*Far From The Madding Crowd*, for all its deeper assurance of style, was something of the mixture as before which Stephen had seemed to suggest he wanted." It needed some real life tragedy, viz. the suicide of his friend Horace Moule—to make Hardy an author to be reckoned with. Thus the "experience" theory raises its head after all, and rather distortingly to my mind. For I would consider *Far From The Madding Crowd* an absolutely central work in Hardy's oeuvre. There is a unity in that sequence of "Wessex" novels which runs from *Far From The Madding Crowd* to *The Woodlanders*; they strike one as having been conceived as a whole, exploring several rural industries and landscapes in turn with something of a Balzacian or Zola-esque system-making; and the last of the sequence, *The Woodlanders*, very closely resembles the first.

Biography tends to be a distraction here. And as for Horace Moule, one feels his tragedy must be significant; but for the life of me I cannot follow Gittings's theory that he was the model for Jude. After all, Moule, the son of a well-to-do vicar, got not only to Oxford but to Cambridge as well, winning the Hulsean prize and becoming a reviewer on a distinguished literary journal: not surely a tragedy of "obscurity" and lack of opportunity? Admittedly he never took a degree, and had a drink-problem; and Robert Gittings brings forward some remarkably interesting facts about him, especially that he had an illegitimate child by a Dorset girl, and this child was brought up in Australia and eventually hanged! Thus, certainly, the image of "Father Time" in *Jude* begins to compose itself before us.

ROBERT GITTINGS'S BOOK takes impetus, in part, from impatience with the *Life* which Hardy ghosted through his second wife. And this is understandable; for if you are looking for the truth about Hardy's private life, you won't find it there, in that repository of evasions, reticences and lies. He is not alone in disliking the *Life*. All the same, when he speaks of its "humorless and colourless pages", which "almost always lack life, except where some flash of country anecdote or incident suddenly enlivens them", I feel once again that "fair-minded"

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frostiness in his tone towards Hardy. For myself, I find the *Life* a magnificent book, a book one can hunt about in endlessly, always finding some moving oddity or "inscape" of genius. How can one resist this?

He was also in London a part of the month, where he saw "what is called sunshine up here—a red-hot bullet hanging in a livid atmosphere—reflected from window-panes in the form of bleared copper eyes, and inflaming the sheets of plate-glass with smears of gory light. A drab snow mingled itself with liquid horsedung, and in the river puddings of ice moved slowly on. The steamers were moored, with snow on their gangways. A captain in sad solitude, smoked his pipe against the bulkhead of the cabin stairs. The lack of traffic made the water like a stream through a deserted metropolis. In the City George Peabody sat comfortably in his easy chair, with snow on the folds of his ample waistcoat, the top of his bare head, and shoulders, and knees."

Or this:

May 30 [1877]. Walking to Marnhull. The prime of bird-singing. The thrushes and blackbirds are the

most prominent,—pleading earnestly rather than singing, and with such modulation that you seem to see their little tongues curl inside their bills in their emphasis. A bullfinch sings from a tree with a metallic sweetness piercing as a fife. Further on I came to a hideous carcase of a house in a green landscape, like a skull on a table of dessert.

IT IS TRUE, most that is good in the book is in these diary-entries, written many years before. But Hardy's diary, though it tells you little enough about his life, tells you much about his sensibility. One studies it as one would study a Turner sketchbook, and with as much admiration. Robert Gittings complains, not unreasonably, that when Hardy should be telling us about his visit (probably searing) to Emma's father near Bodmin, he fobs us off with "a pointless anecdote about another elderly friend of Emma, Miss d'Arville, and her canary, which fainted whenever a cat came into the room, or even when it was showed the picture of a cat." The truth is, I find, I even like the stories about fainting canaries, and that I can't exactly justify.

A Modest Movement

Imagism—By JOHN FULLER

ANYONE WITH AN INTEREST in the poetry of this century has to come to terms with Imagism: the ripples of disturbance still widen and lap, though the original stone was a small one. J. B. Harmer's brief, arising out of a doctoral thesis, was to examine the stone and not the ripples. One can't help but regret this, for given the inaccessibility of American studies of the subject by Glenn Hughes and Stanley Coffman, his is really the first full-length treatment of Imagism to come our way.¹ We might have expected at this date a very large and full perspective. This we do not get.

Historically, Imagism seems absurdly provincial, but its aims were at the centre of the whole modernist programme for poetry, just as Ezra Pound, its eventual spokesman, acted as a catalyst in the developing careers of so many modern writers. Harmer traces patiently the three stages of the movement: the 1909 meetings of the Poet's Club, largely under the influence of T. E. Hulme; the period of Pound's ascendancy between 1912 and 1914; and the take-over by Amy Lowell, which lasted until 1917. The account is

soundly organised, with well-researched and suggestive detail. Chapter 1: the woeful state of poetry at the time. Chapter 2: a brief history of the related movements. Chapter 3: an examination of the work of the poets involved, with liberal quotation. Chapter 4: various influences, French, Japanese, Greek. Chapter 5: an examination of theories lying behind the movement. Chapter 6: a summary of the movement's importance and influence.

The four central chapters, containing the fruits of his research, are full of interest. Our understanding of the aims of the Imagists (economy of language, *vers libre*, direct presentation of things) is steadily and gradually established as we follow the ins-and-outs of their actual relationships. Thus subtly linked, principle and performance seem not so far apart as the mediocrity of the poetry in itself would suggest. Deeply involved in a literary ambience which owes little to talent and a great deal to historical accident, Harmer manages to sound sensibly important and judicious in, for instance, his assertion of the unjust neglect of Seosamh MacCathmhaoil or his demonstration of Pound and Eliot borrowing some salient critical notions from Edward Storer. Unfulfilled ambitions are

¹ *Victory in Limbo: A History of Imagism 1908-1917*. By J. B. HARMER. Secker & Warburg, £6.

weighed, prickly friendships analysed. And of course this sort of detail is the necessary mortar of the whole edifice of literary history. Harmer is very far from being dazed by the close focus. He can, for instance, responsibly engage our sympathy for the ineffectual F. W. Tancred by informing us that all his papers were burned as rubbish by his relatives after his sister's death in 1965, and that much evidence of his contemporaries' esteem has been lost thereby. Nor does such a seriously pathetic ploy prevent him from being quite sharp-tongued about Tancred in the very same paragraph. Later on he virtually admits that all the Imagists were mad.

DESPITE SUCH EVIDENCE of an independent critical mind, Harmer rather disappointingly avoids deep analysis of the poems. This is a pity, since there is generous quotation from the work of the Imagists (the number of poems quoted in full is over two-thirds the number included in Peter Jones's Penguin anthology of a few years back²: it requires a separate index at the front and constitutes a small representative anthology in itself). What comments he does make are usually sensible, but sometimes a little obvious, and often a poem is quoted simply to provide a smoother transition to another topic, like this:

*Thou art come at length
More beautiful
Than any cool god
In a chamber under
Lycia's far coast,
Than any high god
Who touches us not
Here in the seeded grass.
Aye, than Argestes
Scattering the broken leaves.
("Sitalkas" by H. D.)*

The Imagists are, on the whole, vague, moon-struck, picturesque. It is not clear that their miniaturist metaphors could ever sustain a weighty subject or a mood that was not evanescent. Pleading for *dinglichkeit*, they turn out to have very little to write about: the reader sated with airy exhortations or Japanesque urban fantasies rushes to a poet like Hopkins to remind himself of what images can really be like. It is in various neighbouring or derived traditions that the importance and significance of their objectives bear fruit. Technical skill supporting a more serious tactic than the mere "breaking of the pentameter" is to be found, for instance, in D. H. Lawrence or Marianne Moore. Images presented to the reader, intended to work directly upon his sensibility without the mediation of argument or explanatory syntax, derive in W. C. Williams or

² *Imagist Poetry*. Edited by PETER JONES. Penguin, 35p.

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T. S. Eliot from a fully and richly imagined world of mundane or cultural complexity. Economy of language and observation is found in the best "Georgians", a group maligned for a supposed pettiness of subject not noticeably more petty than that of the Imagists.

Harmer does not risk such comparisons, nor does he treat Eliot or Williams with the depth such poets deserve in this context. He does not mention Marianne Moore or Wallace Stevens at all, nor Anna Akhmatova or Louis Zukovsky for that matter, while the idea that there may be identifiable schools of neo-imagist poets deriving from the Lowell of *Life Studies* belongs too much to the outer ripples of the event at the centre of his attention.

THERE ARE TWO REASONS why a small caveat

is in order, I think, though I have no wish to diminish Harmer's central achievement. Peter Jones's *Imagist Poetry*, so much smaller in format and less ambitious in scope, *does* in fact both achieve a deeper, if mercurial, sense of documentation and offer some sort of controlled investigation into the wider implications of Imagism. He finds room to treat Moore, the Objectivists, and even the *Review* poets. Some of the manifestos are reprinted in an appendix. He squeezes in a batch of amusing parodies. All this, too, being incidental to the main purpose of the book, which is to provide a comprehensive anthology of Imagist poetry for the price of five first-class postage stamps.

The second reason is that in his final chapter Harmer does sketch in a few of the ripples, but the result is so peculiar that the reader is left in greater ignorance than he was before. He begins to print bits of William Burroughs as verse and talks of prose and verse drawing closer "in a kind of artistic unisex." Having found a mention of T. E. Hulme in *Alamein to Zem Zem* and no doubt having preserved it in his card index as being of some possible use he proceeds to look for Imagist influence in Keith Douglas. The example no doubt seems more absurd than it need be, because it is quite out of any context. Then, after a nod to Hemingway, Harmer quotes a passage from "the San Francisco writer Michael Palmer." Hemingway is footnoted, but the obscure Palmer is not. The pretence not only that we ought to know who Palmer is but that we do not need to look him up, is characteristic of the sloppy last chapter in which all this occurs. At last the careful academic mask slips: "After Imagism failed in London the old-style gentry culture made its comeback." Nine pages is simply not enough in which to establish this sort of thing. Harmer does not establish it. Nor do

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his discrete glances at poets themselves as discrete as Dorn, Riding or Jim Morrison (another unknown, given an extraordinary culminating plug) tell us quite why Imagism was more important in the U.S. than here. On the vagaries of H. D.'s reputation, of interest to us now that the Carcanet Press have done so much to re-establish it here, Harmer is equally inexplicit. Jones, it may be said, does tackle all this within the space at his disposal and makes it seem very relevant to historical Imagism. As of course it must be, since the ripples belong to the stone.

The unsatisfactory delineation of the larger picture (compared with the assured treatment of the Imagists themselves) is to be found to a certain extent in Harmer's first chapter as well. Setting the scene with an attack on the Victorians, he writes:

Compared with prose fiction English poetry was a dying art. Byron was almost the last man who wrote poetry as speech (with the possible and very different exception of the Brownings). Wordsworth's claim to do so is not confirmed by his work. A powerful exception was Burns in his dialect poems but, even more than D. H. Lawrence, he had reverted to literary idiom when composing in

standard English. The vernacular is rediscovered in Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol."

It is very hard to parry this kind of sabre-flashing, but whatever it is, it is not intelligible literary history. There's a bad misquotation of Housman, incidentally, and an indecisiveness about possessives ("Yeats's", p. 5; "Yeats'", p. 75) which signals haste here. One has no very great quarrel with the picture which emerges (it's the C. K. Stead view: over-riding stagnation provided by Watson, Kipling and Newbolt) but it now seems a little predictable. Edward Thomas, for instance, is barely mentioned: is the single fact that he did not appear in *Georgian Poetry* at all significant in such a context? Harmer's treatment of the Georgians is a mixture of sense and prejudice. It culminates in the bizarre sentence: "The best British poets of the period, Hardy and Yeats, remained aloof." Dear me, shall literary history for evermore pay such lip-service to the claimed priorities of isms and other self-publicists? These years witness the poems of "Veteris vestigia flammae" and *Responsibilities*: what were Hardy and Yeats remaining aloof from? Poems are more interesting than movements.

Remembering the Master

Accounts of Auden—By PETER PORTER

THIS BIG MEMORIAL VOLUME, *W. H. Auden: A Tribute*, edited by Stephen Spender,¹ liberally filled with photographs (though there are many others which could have gone in), is as acutely moving for the public as it must have been for its contributors who knew Auden personally. But it is something more: a look back at the man who may well be the last of the internationally acknowledged English poets. On every page, whatever their nationality, these memorialists stress Auden's deep-seated Englishness—whether this is just social anecdote, as in Robert Craft's and Louis Kronenberger's accounts of his accent, or Hannah Arendt's and Stuart Hampshire's analysis of his particular moral insights. But it was an Englishness which mattered to Americans and Europeans, and it presented itself in proverbial and unparochial ways, so that, in an age where "English" English no longer

dominated either literature or the performing arts, Auden alone among Englishmen took the centre of the world stage as a great teacher and virtuoso poet.

He did it by sheer force of mind and memorability of talent. He was, after all, late on the scene of England's loss of power. Eliot and Pound had fashioned their Modernist templates and Wallace Stevens canonised American poetry before Auden came down from Oxford. By the early Sixties, Edmund Wilson could hail the American Auden as the most accomplished poet in English since the great 19th-century masters, but, years earlier, in "The Omelette of A. MacLeish", he presented Auden as the leader of public schoolboys flying over America in comic aeroplanes. John Berryman, in *Love and Fame* and elsewhere, recalled the semi-impatience which well-instructed American poets felt for Auden's amateur authority; somehow this late arrival was able to impose a world-view which seemed to belong to Britain's 19th-century hegemony, and which was content to mix up

¹ *W. H. Auden: A Tribute*. Edited by STEPHEN SPENDER. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £4.50; Macmillan, N.Y., \$14.95.

intellectually respected disciplines like Marxism and Freudism with prep-school jargon and musical comedy forms. Randall Jarrell, too, whose reviews of Auden are the best journalism ever devoted to him, was American enough to chide him for frivolity many times. Despite Auden's having lived among Americans for more than thirty years, his pre-lapsarian refusal to equate seriousness with solemnity made him a very alien figure in the States.

Yet most of the best criticism of his poetry has come from America, and the second part of this collection of reminiscences, which covers his years in New York and the holidays in Europe, is more interesting than the first, where various English friends remember the schoolboy, under-graduate, and dazzler of the Thirties. Wilson, Berryman and Jarrell are all missing from this tribute of course, and would be even if they were alive, since it is to the man rather than the poet. But it is a reasonably frank assembly of portraits and makes a pleasant change from the purely academic criticism of Auden which has been pouring from the presses for the past five years. When John Fuller's *A Reader's Guide to W. H. Auden* appeared in 1970, I rashly stated that I was surprised that there had been so little commentary on Auden's poetry. Since then, the academic strike rate has quickened: it has dawned on the desk men that his poetry is particularly susceptible to exegesis, since so much of it is preoccupied by ideas. In his memoir, a very different sort of commentator, Robert Craft, makes a similar point—"a conceptualiser in quest of intellectual order, he was a social, moral, and spiritual diagnostician above all."

ALL GENERALISATIONS about a talent as rich and various as Auden's are likely to be inadequate. For instance, can the author of the most memorably lyrical poems of the century (generally called by their creator "Songs and Other Lyrical Pieces") be denied an ear for the music of verse, as Robert Craft would so deny him? And should Mr Richard Johnson, in one of the most recent critical studies of Auden, *Man's Place*,² rebuke John Bayley for asserting that the ideas in the poetry are secondary to the general theatrical effects of the style? In general, Mr Johnson wants us to take Auden's ideas more seriously than we usually do, but he is all too willing to find symmetries of thought where poetical contrivance would seem to govern. However, he is at his best discussing those under-rated poems, the "Bucolics", especially "Woods",

² *Man's Place*. By RICHARD JOHNSON. Cornell University Press, \$11.50, £5.50.

Closing Times

Dan Davin

In *Closing Times* the novelist and publisher Dan Davin has set down first-hand recollections of seven of his friends, all writers, all recently dead: Julian Maclaren-Ross, W. R. Rodgers, Louis MacNeice, Enid Starkie, Joyce Cary, Dylan Thomas, and Itzik Manger. The unifying thread in what is in effect an informal autobiography is Dan Davin's own participation in the episodes chronicled, and his deep feeling for his friends, 'the makers whom death has unmade'. Illustrated £4.95

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dedicated to one of the contributors to Stephen Spender's anthology, Nicolas Nabokov.

It seems as if the gap between the ordinary readers of Auden's poetry and the academic specialists is likely to be wider than with most poets. Perhaps the missing element which might bring them together is a biographical one. If so, we may have to wait a long time for the facts to emerge, since Auden's well-known dislike of prying into writers' lives was reinforced at the end by his request that all who had received letters from him should burn them. But, in his later days, he also showed more willingness to reminisce about his family and friends, and an official biography is promised eventually.

Two points in Spender's compilation seem especially relevant to the case. The first is just a cryptic entry in the prefatory "Chronology", provided by his literary executor, Edward Mendelson. Headed "Probably 1939", it quotes from Auden's contribution to the 1956 anthology, *Modern Canterbury Pilgrims*:

Providentially—for the occupational disease of poets is frivolity—I was forced to know in person what it is like to feel oneself in the prey of demonic powers, in both the Greek and the Christian sense, stripped of self-control and self-respect, behaving like a ham actor in a Strindberg play.

The second is in Hannah Arendt's reminiscences (by far the most distinguished and moving of the tribute's pieces):

I finally saw the misery, somehow realised vaguely his compelling need to hide it behind the "count-your-blessings" litany, and still found it difficult to understand fully what made him so miserable, so unable to do anything about the absurd circumstances that made everyday life so unbearable for him. . . . He seems to me to have been an expert in the infinite varieties of unrequited love among which the infuriating substitution of admiration for love surely must have loomed large.

Miss Arendt also writes of Auden's "extraordinary unhappiness and . . . the extraordinary greatness, intensity of his poetry." Now, it would be critically useless as well as impertinent to try to turn Auden into a confessional writer or some sort of "*poète maudit*." The advantage of re-reading him with the insight gained by some recognition of the unhappiness of his life (I found the letters rebuking Philip Toynbee for his *Observer* review, which posed just this question of how unhappy Auden was in later life, peculiarly priggish) is simply that we no longer have to believe all the many public statements he made about his great fortune and contentment; we go back to the texts of his poems, where human emotions are themselves, whatever rage for order his philosophical mind and poetic imagination imposed upon them. In brief, we

can see him as a great poet, not as only a marvellous rejuvenator of orthodoxies.

*But poets are not celibate divines:
Had Dante said so, who would read his lines?*

Edward Mendelson's "Probably 1939" for Auden's plunge into the demonic points to the slightly uncomfortable watershed which divides these memoirs. We meet many names familiar as the dedicatees of Auden's books or of individual poems—his brother John, Gabriel Carritt (celebrated in the rugged Ode in *The Orators*), Michael Yates, whose gloss on the Auden/MacNeice expedition to Iceland is informative and entertaining, Sir William Coldstream and Cyril Connolly. There are also pieces about Auden at prep school and at Gresham's. Christopher Isherwood disappoints us, since he adds only a short reconsideration to the article he originally contributed to the Auden Double Number of *New Verse* in 1937. Interesting as this earlier section is, it lacks weight by comparison with the post-1939 commentary. No one attempts to describe the impact which the young Auden made on the England of the Thirties, the sense of the times having found a voice, Julian Symons's book, *The Thirties*, being the nearest we have to such a survey. *The Orators*, *Letters from Iceland*, *The Dog Beneath the Skin* and *Look, Stranger* reproduce that decade so definitively that further comment is perhaps unnecessary.

NOW THAT WE HAVE THE DEMON to add to Auden's perfectly plausible desire to escape from the English literary world's "family life", we can modulate into the vital American years (notably 1940 to 1947, the time of the long poems) more credibly. Here Ursula Niebuhr's memories and those of Anne Fremantle are vital. His return to the church must have been as much to escape the demon's clutches as it was to please mother or exorcise the wicked spirit of historicism. The theological Auden has been well enough charted, and, in my opinion, overvalued, but it is agreeable to meet him in the everyday world of religion, without a halo or the sinister effulgence of conversion. He esteemed the mystics but he was no more likely to become one than he was to go mad. In his selection of Herbert for Penguin Books, he remarks nonchalantly that he would like to have known the Caroline poet personally. One wonders if he'd have felt the same about Kierkegaard or even Goethe.

Maurice Mandelbaum's recollection of Auden at Swarthmore College introduces an aspect of him much less often mentioned than his return to Christianity—his teaching. He must have been

a marvellous teacher—unafraid of showing what he knew, propounding theories whose audacity he had no desire to see turned into dogma, and, above all, illuminating his friends' and his students' moral natures by analysis, advice and example. Nicolas Nabokov's contribution pays eloquent tribute to Auden's power to suggest the solution to a moral dilemma without interfering in his friend's freedom of choice. Nabokov, too, manages to mix a flavour of "camp" (for so long piously kept out of all writing about Auden, following his own prohibition) with the morality, and, along with James Stern and Lincoln Kirstein, shows us the mysterious figure of the poet, in American uniform, travelling through the ruins of Germany in 1945.

Nabokov was to receive almost the last gift which Auden bestowed, the libretto of *Love's Labour's Lost*, in 1973. He and Robert Craft discuss Auden's musical collaborations, and indicate firmly the leading role played in them by Chester Kallman, who died so tragically soon after his friend. Kallman, on all the evidence a fairly undistinguished poet, became, as librettist, a very considerable figure. Many opera lovers regard the brothel scene in *The Rake's Progress* as one of the most perfect structures, musically and verbally, since Mozart. This, we are reminded, was conceived and executed in the libretto by Kallman. Craft seems to have loved and admired Auden sincerely, but his acidulated style permits him to spice his affection with observations such as "[he] came to rehearsals in a white linen suit, polka-dotted in front with Chianti stains."

AND SO THE PROGRESS CONTINUES, to the unhappy end of reiterated anecdotes, blessings too often counted and the inability of the admiring world to give the poet the serenity his old age desired. At Oxford, David Luke saw the very real generation gap which separated Auden from the new iconoclasts. One undergraduate said, "It didn't matter two shits what he did—we'd have thought him great." But another, and I suspect more representative, declared, "I wasn't the least interested in Auden, any more than I am in Picasso or Stravinsky or Casals or Shostakovich; our inspirations and models are different nowadays." That difference is all around us: Auden, who seemed so immediate for so long, is now a growth area of literary criticism. The authors of this book join with the great public in feeling his loss. The wonderful legacy of the works remains, but it is not only his friends who feel that a powerful protector has gone. For years, the world of the imagination was illuminated by Auden's presence, and those of us who hardly knew him or never met him grieve as acutely as do his close friends. He was our mentor too.

AUTHORS

Nadine Gordimer shared the Booker Prize for her last novel, *The Conservationist* (Cape, 1974). . . .

Alasdair MacIntyre's article was read at a conference organised by the University of Texas Medical School at Galveston last year. It is appearing in the proceedings of that conference, *Exploration and Evolution in the Biomedical Sciences* (Reidel, 1975). We are indebted to the University of Texas for permission to publish it. . . .

Dr W. O. Henderson has published numerous books on European and particularly German economic history in the 18th and 19th centuries, including *The Zollverein and Britain and Industrial Europe 1750–1870*. He was until recently Reader in International Economic History in the University of Manchester. His 2-volume biography of Engels was published in October (1974). . . .

Dr W. H. Chaloner has collaborated with Dr Henderson in a number of translations from the German, particularly of F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (2nd ed. 1971). He is reader in Modern Economic History in the University of Manchester. . . .

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Malcolm Bradbury is Professor of American Literature at the University of East Anglia. His most recent book of criticism, *Possibilities*, was published by Oxford University Press in 1973. . . .

Bernard Bergonzi is Professor of English at the University of Warwick. His latest collection of essays is *The Turn of a Century* (Macmillan, 1973). . . .

Laurence Lerner is Professor of English at the University of Sussex. His most recent critical book is *The Uses of Nostalgia* (Chatto & Windus). . . .

John Fuller is a Lecturer in English at the University of Oxford, and a fellow of Magdalen College. His most recent book of poems is *Epistles to Several Persons* (Secker & Warburg, 1974). . . .

P. N. Furbank is writing the official biography of E. M. Forster. He is General Editor of the New Wessex Edition of Hardy's novels (Macmillan), and is a Lecturer in English with the Open University. . . .

Peter Porter is at present spending six months as Visiting Writer at the University of Sydney. His latest book, in collaboration with the painter Arthur Boyd, is *The Lady and the Unicorn* (Secker & Warburg, 1975). . . .

Don Cook was resident correspondent for *The New York Herald Tribune* in Britain, Germany and France, and is now correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*.

EAST & WEST

On Revealing the “Last Secret”

By Don Cook



A NAME WHICH recurs with particular interest in *The Last Secret*,¹ Nicholas Bethell's even-handed and harrowing account of the forced repatriation at the end of World War II of some two million Russians who had fallen into the hands of British and American forces, is that of Thomas Brimelow.

At the time Brimelow was a junior in the diplomatic service, assigned to Northern Department in the Foreign Office where he initiated many of the first drafts of policy recommendations and political analysis concerning the Soviet Union which then moved on up through the machinery, minute by minute, to become official policy. Brimelow was then 28 or 29 years old, fluent in a number of languages including Russian, of marked intelligence and self-confidence, and particularly clear, incisive, precise and forceful in expressing himself on paper. The Foreign Office has a public reputation for woolliness and obfuscation of language because that is what diplomats generally do in public pronouncements, but in fact Foreign Office written English prose (and occasional verse) often turns out to be very good reading indeed.

The trouble is, of course that nobody gets to read Foreign Office prose until so long after the events that by the time old records and documents are released there are few writers or historians (or even journalists) around who can relate the ideas and language and expression of thought to the personalities, the political conditions, the emotions, the smell and the feel of the

time when they were written. The change in the old “fifty-year rule” in Britain which now permits release of most official government records after thirty years is beginning to bring source material out into the open within living memory of events and within the lifetime of participants.

Sir Thomas Brimelow, permanent under-secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as he is today, thus becomes a first “victim” (as he may feel himself to be) of the new rule. For the first time in British diplomatic history, the records of policy minutes of a junior diplomat have been made public not only during his lifetime but while he is still active and now highly influential at the top of government service.

Brimelow was not called upon to make any moral or indeed political judgment about “The Last Secret”—forced-repatriation policy. The minutes which he found himself drafting on the subject concerned implementation of a policy already laid down. The moral and political judgment, such as it was, had already been made by Anthony Eden, with a determination verging on that of some high cardinal of the Inquisition marking out victims by casuistical category and drawing up lists of dead souls. Even before the invasion of Normandy, the Foreign Office concluded that if any Russian fell into Allied hands

“in due course all those with whom the Soviet authorities desire to deal must be handed over to them, and we are not concerned with the fact that they may be shot or otherwise more harshly dealt with than they might be under English law.”

On 20 July 1944, before the Allied armies had even broken out of the Normandy bridgehead (and also the day of the assassination attempt against Hitler), Eden wrote to inform the Soviet Ambassador in London of the capture of the first few thousand Russians serving with German labour battalions on the West Wall, and added with almost unctuous solicitude:

“The Soviet government will no doubt wish to ascertain in detail the circumstances in which these Soviet nationals came to serve in enemy military or para-military formations and the conditions under which they are at present being detained. For this purpose, His Majesty's Government are anxious to make arrangements whereby the Soviet authorities in the United Kingdom may be put in direct contact with these Soviet nationals.”

The outcome of this invitation bordered on black humour. A Soviet military attaché in London was indeed dispatched to visit the camps, and shortly after Ambassador Gousev turned up at the Foreign Office to deliver an astounding verbal protest to Anthony Eden about the “degrading” conditions and treatment which these Soviet nationals were receiving from

¹ *The Last Secret*. By NICHOLAS BETHELL. André Deutsch, £3.45; Basic Books, \$8.95.

the British, including the *bad food* they were getting.²

Maybe the Russians staged this fatuous charade to convey to British minds that Father Stalin had a high concern for the welfare and morale of his Russian children everywhere. In any case, Eden manfully rose to the occasion and replied to Gousev:

"These Russians and indeed other foreigners captured fighting in the ranks of the German Army against our troops have created considerable problems for us. The least the Soviet government can do would be to help us in handling this problem and not bring complaints that we are not treating the men well."

EDEN FROM THE OUTSET had, therefore, established not merely the policy but also and perhaps more importantly the tone and manner in which the policy was to be carried out. There were certainly some fairly strong practical and political considerations behind the policy which Lord Bethell fully acknowledges, but the vigour with which it was pursued eventually became the moral problem—not the policy as such.

Uppermost in Eden's mind from the outset was the fact that the Russians would soon be liberating British and American prisoners-of-war held in German prison camps all over Eastern Europe, and that these men could well become hostages for the return of the Russians falling into Allied hands. Then there was the narrow Foreign Office definition of the legalities of the problem—the opinion that the fate of all "Soviet nationals" who wound up behind Allied lines "is purely a question for the Soviet government and authorities and does not concern His Majesty's Government." And, finally, for Eden there was the more abstract but none the less dominant concern that this was the culminating moment of triumph for the Grand Alliance, when cooperation, trust, and confidence between the Allies and the Russians, along with prosecution of the war against Japan and the whole future organisation of the Post-War world were still at stake; and these high considerations should not be allowed to flounder or be jeopardised by the relatively minor question of what to do with a few thousand Russians, some of whom might conceivably not want to go home.

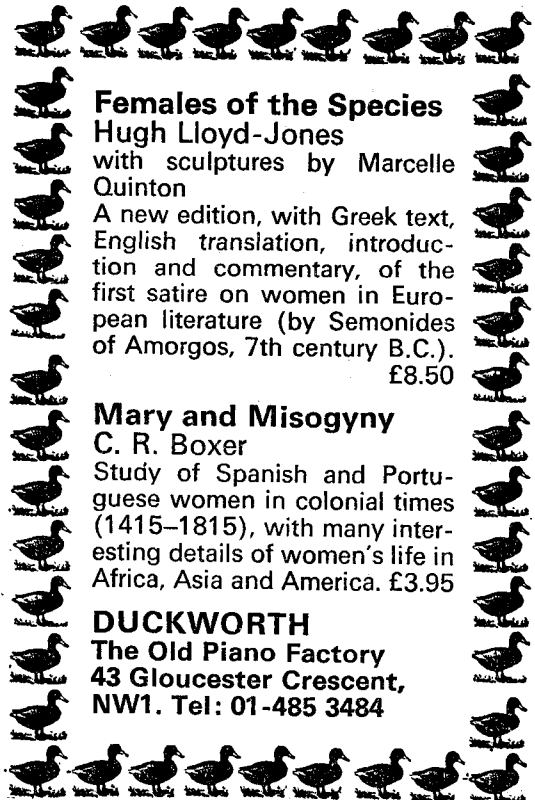
² The visiting Soviet officer was also visibly upset when he read over some of the Russian-language literature which Russian émigré groups in Britain had thoughtfully given the innocent British to distribute in the camps. When it was explained to the British commandant what dirty and dangerous stuff this was, he instantly promised in embarrassment to have it all removed; and the inspecting Russian officer gallantly promised in return that he would overlook this dreadful British blooper in his report to the Soviet Embassy in London.

THE TROUBLE WAS, of course, that the problem turned out to be far greater than the wildest anticipations—not just a few thousand Russians or even tens of thousands of Russians but hundreds of thousands of Russians. It quickly exceeded merely sending back to their doom Russians who had put on German uniforms and fought side-by-side against the Red Army and the Western Allies.

There are no exact figures, because in the end everybody was lumped together for forced repatriation—men, women and children—but probably no more than 15-to-20% of the two million or so could have been condemned as "traitors" who actually wore Nazi uniforms and took up arms with the enemy. Alexander Solzhenitsyn would have waived even these from repatriation:

"They never would have joined the Vlasovite ranks of the *Wehrmacht* had they not been driven to the final extreme, beyond the bounds of despair, and had they not nursed an unquenchable hatred towards the Soviet régime."

It would have been rather hard with the guns barely cool for Eden and the Western Allies to have followed this logic. But even so, Eden allowed no flexibility and even in narrow legalities he was quite wrong. His policy condemned to



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forced repatriation many thousands of Russians (including almost all of the colourful Cossacks with their wives and children) who were *not* "Soviet nationals" at all. They had fled from the Soviet Union shortly after the 1917 Revolution and could not by any stretch of imagination or law be subjected to forced repatriation to a country in which they hadn't lived for twenty-five years or more. But they were. Eden refused from the outset to permit any mitigating interpretations—or alleviations, or adjustments, or even blind-eye exceptions—to his policy to take root. He was a vain man, with a short temper and frustrations of conceit, serving always in Churchill's shadow; and while this side of his character was not as obvious or as well known at this period as it came to be after his Prime Ministership and the Suez War, it was certainly known at the Foreign Office. Eden had no trouble with his own officials about pushing the policy, but he did run up against some powerful and perhaps surprising opponents outside, including Lord Selborne (who was Minister for Economic Warfare), Sir James Grigg (the civil servant who ran the War Office with such efficiency), and Churchill himself.

THE REPATRIATION POLICY had first been accepted by the inner War Cabinet at Eden's proposal on 17 July 1944. Almost immediately Selborne (not a member of the War Cabinet) wrote to Churchill outlining evidence which had come his way at Economic Warfare as to the conditions under which the Russians, Poles, Czechs and others had been impressed into German labour units, and declaring his "great regret" at a policy of sending these men home to "certain death." Grigg also wrote that "I find the prospect rather revolting" and in particular warned of the "unpleasant business" of the British Army having to hand Russian prisoners "back to their death." Churchill then minuted:

"I think we dealt rather summarily with this at Cabinet, and the point put should certainly be reconsidered. Even if we are somewhat compromised [with the Soviet government] all the apparatus of delay may be used. I think these men were tried beyond their strength."

But Eden would brook no delay or mitigation and pressed remorselessly on, preparing a new paper to refute the points raised by Selborne and Grigg which went before the War Cabinet again on 4 September. It was approved after "a short discussion." Eden then volunteered his personal assurances on the matter to Molotov in talks in Moscow in October; and at the Yalta Conference in February 1945 the forced repatriation policy was enshrined in a formal agreement between the Soviets and the British and American governments.

At this point in the actual fighting, the Allied forces were mopping up after the Battle of the Bulge and closing to the Rhine. They could still number their Russian captives in the tens-of-thousands, and could still regard most of them as "traitors" serving the enemy either in the front lines or building fortifications or driving trucks or passing Nazi ammunition. It was still in a soldier's mind pretty much a black-and-white question with few areas of grey.

But unknown to the Allies there were now hundreds of thousands of Russians in the unconquered heart of Germany, working as volunteer or impressed labour in German factories and farms, or women and children falling back from the Ukraine with the retreating German Armies to escape the certain fate which awaited them from their liberating countrymen. By the time of the Potsdam conference in July 1945, therefore, the dimensions of the problem had altered for the Allies out of all expectation. By now the British and American military authorities were face-to-face with the "unpleasant business" of which Grigg had warned; and it was no longer a case of dealing brusquely with Russians who had fought in Nazi uniforms. The harrowing scenes of resistance to the point of suicide were beginning to multiply, and senior officers were beginning to question with increasing urgency the morality and wisdom and necessity of the unequivocal orders they were getting under the forced repatriation policy.

At Potsdam, Churchill returned to the subject to do battle with Eden and the Foreign Office once again. Lord Bethell in his extremely thorough sifting of all the complex records of this tragic affair was unable to quote from the discussion and Churchill's final, thwarted intervention; the Potsdam records were then not open. This is regrettable because although it changed nothing in the history of the actual events it does provide an important insight into the workings of Churchill's practical morality. Moreover, had Churchill not been out of office three weeks later, it seems almost certain that he eventually *would* have changed the course of the horrendous affair.

THE DISCUSSION AT POTSDAM opened when Molotov declared his scandalised amazement at the fact that out of 10,000 Ukrainians being held in a camp in Italy under British supervision, only 655 had volunteered to return to the Soviet Union when interviewed by Russian officers. His view was quite clear—this was all the fault of the devious British; when were they going to put an end to this nonsense and ship these Soviet nationals home as called for in the Yalta agreement?

Churchill, meanwhile, had protested vigorously to Stalin over the treatment which the Red Army and Soviet civil authorities were handing out to British and American military teams in the liberated capitals of Eastern Europe. They were supposed to be operating as part of the joint armistice commissions; but Churchill complained to Stalin (using the historic phrase apparently for the first time) that they instead were getting "Iron Curtain treatment" from the Russians. Perhaps a political relation of the two problems formed in Churchill's mind. At any rate, after the meeting he minuted to Foreign Office members of the British delegation:

"Britain should not insist any longer on getting back British nationals in Russia, and should also refrain from returning Russian citizens to the USSR who might not wish to go."

Had the Foreign Office been ready to take its cue from the Prime Minister, everything would have changed. But the daring Machiavellian simplicity of Churchill's stratagem threw poor Sir Alexander Cadogan, who then sat where Sir Thomas Brimelow now sits, into a tizzy. Almost hysterically, the permanent under-secretary dashed off a reply citing Eden's personal assurances on the subject to Molotov, the official text of the Yalta agreement, and the "very careful consideration which this question has been given on several occasions." The Soviet Union just would never understand if Britain broke its word and put itself in the position of "harbouring traitors", Cadogan's minute said, adding only this loophole: "It may be possible to arrange for the unobtrusive disappearance of a few genuine recalcitrants, but in view of our clear commitments it is impossible to propose that only those who wish to return should be sent back." Three weeks later, of course, Churchill was out of office; and that was the end of that.

THERE WAS A KIND of splendid double standard about Winston Churchill. He could be both merciless and compassionate, sternly moral and utterly devious, highly principled and totally expedient. He operated on a grand scale and his was the kind of leadership which, if war is necessary, then is necessary in war (certainly for winning a war). He was ruthless in his orders to the Royal Navy to fire on the French fleet at Oran in June of 1940, knowing he was sending hundreds of French sailors to their death—and it was not for that supposed equation about "strategic naval balance" which he proclaimed to be his reason, but purely and simply his elemental determination to shock the world into a realisation of his will, his power, his leadership, his readiness to employ every means for Britain to fight on. And who can

say he was wrong? Yet at the Teheran conference he abruptly left the dinner table and walked out on Stalin and Roosevelt when they began making macabre jokes about "shooting 50,000 German staff officers" out of hand at the end of the War.

"I would rather be taken out into the garden here and now and be shot myself than sully my own and my country's honour by such infamy," Churchill growled as he got up from the table. And he added in his War Memoirs that "I was not then and am not now fully convinced that all was chaff and there was no serious intent lurking behind, although I consented to return and the rest of the evening passed pleasantly. . . ."

AFTER POTSDAM, with Churchill out of office and Attlee's Labour Government in power in London, Eden's forced repatriation policy was simply allowed to grind on remorselessly with its dark doom-laden momentum. The orders had gone out to the soldiers from the War Office in London and the War Department in Washington, and by September something like 1.4 million human beings had indeed been herded into troop transports for sea voyages to Odessa and Murmansk, or loaded into railway cars for the Soviet zones of control in Austria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Poland. Often the Allies even had trouble bringing back the empty trains.

But the cries of disgust, shame, and sheer anger at the degrading and dirty job were now rising from British officers in particular. Clement Attlee at Downing Street and Ernest Bevin at the Foreign Office had plenty else on their minds in those turbulent and climactic days, and the cries from the field never really seemed to get through. Here, certainly, Churchill's continued presence at 10 Downing Street would have made all the difference. Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, supreme allied commander in Italy, was to his credit the most persistent and eloquent of the senior military men pleading for a flexible interpretation of the repatriation orders. Had

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Churchill still been around it is a certainty that Alexander would have appealed to him directly; for Churchill always communicated directly with senior commanders in the field, and his relations with Alexander had been particularly close. Had Alexander been able to invoke the honour and good name of the British Army to Churchill as he tried to do with the War Office, it seems virtually certain that Churchill would have gone back to his simple proposal at Potsdam, ordered an end to forced repatriation, and Stalin-and-Molotov-and-Yalta-agreements be damned. He might well have told the Foreign Office to address its intelligence to re-interpreting the agreement and delaying its implementation, *i.e.* stonewalling the Russians instead of kowtowing to them.

There was not even any effort at some point in the awful game to say, "Look, we've got all the British and American prisoners home, so why go on with this farce of forced repatriation of the Russians?" Bethell's book does not make clear exactly when the repatriation of the British and American POWs was completed, or how many had been freed by the Russians. Quite probably there are no precise records on these points. But he does state that "by the end of May 1945, 28,662 American prisoners had been recovered from Soviet control, 2,858 of them by sea from Odessa, the rest overland." This would indicate that repatriation of the Allied soldiers in fact moved fairly rapidly after the end of the War, and that probably not more than 75,000 in all were involved, far fewer than the number of Russians in Western hands. Churchill probably had this in mind when he made his Potsdam proposal that Britain should forget about insisting on getting back British nationals in Russia. The "hostage" fear which lay behind Eden's forced repatriation policy had, in short, evaporated early on.

IT WAS NOT BRIMELOW'S JOB at the Foreign Office to reason why, though he was quite evidently alert to the moral repugnance which would greet any public disclosure of what was going on. When the Americans, with child-like innocence, actually inquired of the British whether the Yalta repatriation agreement should not be registered with the fledgling United Nations and made public, Brimelow instantly minuted:

"STRONG objection. This agreement must remain secret."

Later he became the only Foreign Office official to be confronted personally with the kind of harrowing distress which the policy was causing not only thousands upon thousands of Russians, but hundreds of British officers and soldiers. The plight of one lone Russian couple, Ivan and Nataliya Sidorov, was taken up by a British Quaker who enlisted the help of a Member of

Parliament. He then managed to penetrate the portals of the Foreign Office with Mrs Sidorov for a personal interview with Brimelow. It was conducted not only in the Russian language but Russian style.

"She fell on her knees, placed her forehead on the ground in the traditional Russian manner and implored my assistance in saving her husband and her from deportation," Brimelow recorded. "I told her that I could not give her any explicit assurances as no decision regarding the fate of herself and her child had yet been taken."

Mrs Sidorov poured out a tearful account of how she had followed her husband across Western Europe when he had been impressed into a German labour battalion, of her present separation from him while he was held in a camp for repatriation, and how she would die without him.

"Poor Mr Brimelow, she knelt there on the floor and grabbed him round the knees so that he couldn't move," Mrs Sidorov's sponsor recalled. "I felt so sorry for both of them."

At first the Foreign Office remained adamant, but the fact that the Sidorovs had produced a child born in England had its effect on official thinking—plus the public support which was being organised for their case. Humanitarian considerations finally prevailed, and Brimelow minuted somewhat wearily:

"Since we are proposing to break the [Yalta] agreement in respect of the mother, we might as well break it in respect of the father too."

To which Eden affixed a final minute, written during the Potsdam conference, and indeed one of the final minutes of his wartime tenure at the Foreign Office:

"All right, keep the family. But delay our answer as long as we can so we can get as many people out as we can. I have some fear of reprisals."

It is interesting that Churchill at Potsdam apparently had no worries at all about reprisals or British hostages if forced repatriation were suspended; but Eden worried on.

THE FIRST REAL BREAK in the situation came in early October, 1945, when it was suddenly announced in Frankfurt that General Eisenhower was suspending forced repatriation. Brimelow hastily wrote to Colonel V. M. Hammer of the prisoner-of-war directorate at the War Office: "We are both mystified and alarmed by this statement which of course is quite contradictory to His Majesty's Government's policy."

At the very outset, long before the Yalta agreement, two senior American cabinet ministers—War Secretary Henry Stimson and Attorney-General Robert Jackson—had both written to President Roosevelt to express their alarm and

deep moral objections to any forced repatriation policy; and the Americans throughout were a great deal less committed in their minds than the British. Of course the main burden was on the British, who, by the luck of the geographical draw at the end of the War in northern Germany, eastern Austria and northern Italy, wound up with the vast bulk of the Russians under the control of the British Army.

THERE WAS CERTAINLY another element too in this situation, implicit in Bethell's account but perhaps worth elaborating, and that is the difference of political culture, of government method and style. Britain at this time was probably at the peak of its history in terms of sheer governmental direction, control, and efficiency. It was a machine which had been tightened and tuned throughout the War by Churchill and his exceptional War Cabinet team, and therefore when a policy was decided on high it was transmitted and carried out right down the line. Not so with the Americans. Often one department did not know what another department was doing, and just as often would set out to sabotage a rival branch of government if it did know. General Eisenhower's announcement in Frankfurt that he was suspending forced repatriation was a case in point. Field Marshal Alexander was fighting just as hard in Italy against the policy; but Alexander would never have dreamed of taking the public action against his own government's policy which Eisenhower took.

In any case, the Americans now proposed to the British a compromise interpretation of the Yalta agreement under which only Soviet nationals who had been in the Red Army or who had actively collaborated with the Nazis would now be returned forcibly to Russia. The formula was largely the work of Charles E. Bohlen, who was Roosevelt's personal interpreter at Yalta and a senior U.S. State Department adviser on Soviet affairs. Bohlen differed sharply with the British interpretation of the Yalta agreement and the handling of the whole affair. In his Memoirs, he speaks of the agreement as "certainly open to question and one which perhaps caused the United States and Britain more moral anguish than any other." Bohlen then wrote:

"It has always been my feeling that the execution of this agreement went beyond the conditions laid down in the text. The controlling paragraph of the agreement said:

"All Soviet citizens liberated by forces operating under United States command and all United States citizens liberated by forces operating under Soviet command will without delay after their liberation be separated from enemy prisoners of war and will be maintained separately from them in camps or points of concentration until they have been handed over to the United States or

Soviet authorities, as the case may be, at places agreed upon between the authorities."

There was nothing in this agreement that required the forcible repatriation of unwilling Soviet citizens to the Soviet Union."

The text of the British agreement with the Russians was virtually identical with the text of the American agreement. The fact that Eden, Brimelow, and the Foreign Office did not read or interpret the document the way Bohlen would have interpreted it does not quite mean that they were right and Bohlen was wrong. It simply means that they *could* have interpreted the agreement differently if they had chosen to do so.

But in December 1945, with another Big Four Council of Foreign Ministers meeting coming up in Moscow, Brimelow was still in there fighting hard to get the Russian repatriation cleaned up. By now Alexander had departed from Italy to become governor-general in Canada, but General Sir Richard McCreery, commanding British forces in Austria, returned to the issue with yet another reasoned and forceful humanitarian plea to his superiors at the War Office for flexibility, particularly when it came to using force on women and children. Brimelow drafted the Foreign Office reply:

"The arguments advanced by General McCreery against forcible repatriation seem to us quite unconvincing." He went on to say that

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political asylum (suggested by McCreery as a way out) was normally granted by the British only to those who reach British territory and not to those who fall into the hands of British forces. (By this token, what about the fate of those Russian POWs who *were* on British territory, like the Sidorovs?) As to using force against women and children which McCreery said was "contrary to normal British practice," Brimelow's reply was simply that "the situation which gave rise to the Yalta agreement is without precedent in British history."

In general, the soldiers in this case showed a great deal more humanitarian concern and political guts than the civilians. Some, of course, took the orders as they came and carried them out without any particular thought or concern. But many others up and down the line not only protested against their orders, but subverted them continuously. This was of course long before the Nuremberg trials and the emergence of what might be called the "Nuremberg syndrome" about soldiers obeying orders contrary to conscience or humanitarian practice.

It would be stretching the "Nuremberg syndrome" much too far to argue that forced repatriation of the Russians to their homeland by British soldiers was the same as, say, mass execution of innocent and random civilian hostages by the Nazi militia. The reaction of British officers and soldiers, and the attitude and conduct of a few toward their orders, may not have saved many lives but it certainly showed where humanitarian conscience lay in the British Army. General Sir Horatius Murray in one of the many letters to *The Times* on the affair which Lord Bethell's book has prompted tells how he, as commander of an armoured division in Austria, simply called his officers together, told them of his orders to initiate the repatriation, and then said that he did not intend to carry them out immediately. He invited his officers to think it over and "convey this to all ranks" and adds:

"We had remarkably few prisoners on our hands the following day. They melted into the hinterland with no difficulty at all."

Lord Bethell reasons that Eden's experience over the forced repatriation led to his rather more robust and forthright stand when the same problem arose during the Korean War in 1952-3. Maybe so; but it is also true that Churchill was again Eden's Prime Minister, and that the policy was laid down by the United States with the British only called upon to support it. The policy was really a combination of Churchill's Potsdam formulation and General Murray's "blind-eye" action. The Allies in 1952 said they would not insist on forced repatriation of any of their soldiers wishing to stay on the Communist side, and would not impose forced repatriation on Communist prisoners they were holding. Then Korean President Syngman Rhee turned the whole thing into a turmoil by simply opening up a lot of POW cages one night and allowing the Chinese prisoners who did not want to go home to "melt into the hinterland."

AS FOR THE EFFECT OF ALL THIS on Sir Thomas Brimelow and his thinking about the Soviet Union, and how to deal with the Russians across these post-war years, perhaps one day he will make his reflections known without waiting for the thirty-year rule. He is certainly one of the best intellects and toughest minds to have reached the top of the Foreign Office. Swift, direct incisiveness has always struck me, in my own brief occasional talks with him, as being his particular hallmark—in particular a kind of clipped suspicion of anything emanating from Moscow. He has a simple motto about how "you must always be prepared in any negotiation to sit one day longer than the Russians", and it is certain that in recent months he has kept his own hand firmly on the instructions going out from London to the European Conference on Security and Cooperation in Geneva. By making sure that the Western delegations sit "one day longer" than the Russians, quite a bit has been achieved in Geneva which seemed beyond reach when the whole operation got under way four years ago. In particular the final document will show new commitments by the Russians in the humanitarian field—the simple right of families to be united, of Soviet nationals to marry nationals of other countries and to depart from the Soviet Union, and even a recognition (on paper at least) of the right of peoples peaceably to change their system of government. And it was also Brimelow who was the key official in organising and pushing through the expulsion of 105 Soviet intelligence agents from Britain in 1972. His later Foreign Office papers will probably make much better reading in thirty years' time than do his early ones.

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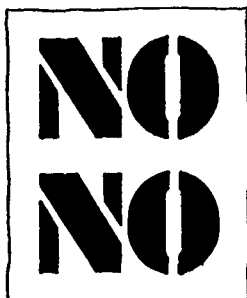
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AUTHORS & CRITICS

A Reply to P. T. Bauer

“Foreign Aid, Forever?”

By Robert Cassen



NOT ALL paradoxes are true, just as not all truisms are false. There is something paradoxical about the suggestion that aid is bad for development, and Peter Bauer obviously enjoys propagating it. We should not listen to him for that reason.

Indeed, we should not listen to him at all.

I shall go through his main arguments in the framework in which he states them, although this puts me at a disadvantage.

ARGUMENT I: “Aid is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for development.”

It is certainly true that countries can develop without aid, and that they can receive aid and fail to develop. Bauer therefore quotes remarks to the effect that aid is “indispensable” and the like with some derision. It is possible to show that, under a certain set of assumptions, a particular *rate* of growth is unattainable without aid; and many would feel that a number of developing countries have little prospect of improving their conditions substantially, and in a reasonably short time, without concessional balance-of-payments support. This is what is commonly meant when aid is described as “necessary”—though adherents of this view would agree that many of the assumptions in such arguments are problematic, and

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PROFESSOR PETER BAUER's article, “Foreign Aid, Forever?” appeared in the March 1974 ENCOUNTER.

certainly that aid is not the only thing that is necessary. Thus ARGUMENT I, while strictly speaking correct as stated, is misleading. A dining table is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for eating, but many find it helpful.

ARGUMENT II: “Economic achievement depends primarily on people's aptitudes and attitudes and their social institutions and political arrangements. Differences in human determinants largely account for differences in economic achievement and rates of progress.”

This argument is so broad as to be difficult to dispute, though I would give more weight than Professor Bauer to resources, geographical location, and the international context of development. I would also give some thought to the question of *why* people's “aptitudes and attitudes”, and their social and political institutions, are what they are. Professor Bauer sometimes speaks as though the human aptitudes in question are determined largely by genetic inheritance. ARGUMENT II, though, really comes into its own in conjunction with ARGUMENT III:

“If the conditions for development other than capital are present, capital will be generated locally or supplied to governments or to business commercially from abroad. If the required conditions are not present, aid will be unproductive and therefore ineffective.”

The main thing wrong with this argument, for present purposes, is that it is excessively dichotomous. There are many countries where some, but not all, the conditions of development are present. These conditions may or may not be expected to appear with time and effort. If aid can help this process, so much the better. Supposing countries have very few of these conditions—are they to be simply written off? Also ARGUMENT III implies heavy reliance for the Third World on private foreign capital. But there is plenty of evidence that private foreign capital can be deleterious to development as well as helpful—particularly, for some countries, in producing a great outflow of foreign exchange. Few governments in the Third World have succeeded in attracting only the helpful variety and keeping the unhelpful out.

According to ARGUMENT IV,

“Official aid reinforces the tendency to politicise life in poor countries.”

Aid being government-to-government loans, it increases “the power, resources and patronage of governments compared to the rest of society.” Depending on the complexion of the governments in question, this might or might not be a good thing in my book, if it were true. But it is perfectly possible that if aid is channelled mainly into infra-structure projects in a country which strongly favours private capital, domestic and foreign,

it is the private sector that will benefit. There certainly are countries where aid has had this role. (Of course private capital also has a strong influence on the nature of governments, by no means universally benevolent. Bauer does not mention such things.)

ARGUMENT V states that aid

"reinforces the pursuit of policies damaging to material progress."

The maltreatment of "productive and economically successful minorities" is cited as a case in point. Engaging in economic planning and the pursuit of socialist policies are other damaging activities which aid may "reinforce." It is in fact fallacious to suggest that because country *x* pursues policy *y* and also receives aid, aid is reinforcing that policy. It is most unlikely that countries would discriminate less against minorities if they had less aid. It is true that some left-wing governments receive aid; it is also true that some governments are assisted by aid, or at least not discouraged, in the pursuit of unfortunate policies—but this is far from universal. Most commonly the donors believe that recipient governments will pursue the policies they pursue with or without aid. But whatever their policies, the reduction of poverty may be hastened if they finance a fertiliser plant, or a power station, at concessional rates. Further, a vast amount of aid goes to right-wing governments with policies for advancing prosperity such as Bauer approves of—indeed, part of the "radical" critique of aid is that it is almost universally designed to "make the Third World safe for capitalism." This view and that of Professor Bauer cannot both be correct. But they can both be wrong.

ARGUMENT VI states that aid often supports extremely wasteful projects, and frequently promotes investments reflecting inappropriate Western models. I agree with ARGUMENT VI (but see below). Something similar might be said of private enterprise.

ARGUMENT VII is a series of barbs directed against the notion that aid should assist the relief of poverty: (1) "The statistics of income-per-head are quite useless for international comparison and for the measurement of need." Unreliable, yes, and inadequate for many purposes—but *quite useless*?

Every undergraduate learns that exchange rates do not measure purchasing power parity; anyone who works on development knows the weakness of data collection in developing countries, that per-capita income is a crude index of anything, that we have to know about distribution as well as average incomes. And a good deal of effort goes

into the assembly of more sensitive indices of need.

Is Professor Bauer trying to abolish poverty by complaining about the statistics? I should like him to address the inhabitants of Bihar on this subject. But he might first read the literature on indices of development or (if he has read it, as I suspect he has) acknowledge its existence.

(2) "Aid does not really reach the poor"—there is some truth in this, though it is not easy to determine who are the beneficiaries of aid projects. For instance, who benefits from power stations? But to say that the poorest are neglected in aid *discussion* is nonsense. There is no more heated subject in aid agencies today.

(3) "An important class of beneficiaries [of aid] is the staff members of the international agencies." So what? If aid is worthwhile, it has to pay the going rates to hire its functionaries. Is it a defect of private industry that it benefits its managers?

(4) Aid discussions all too often "ignore the diversity of the less developed world", overlooking the differences between rich and poor countries and the rich and the poor within these countries. I don't know what Professor Bauer reads, but it is not what I read. The recent "Boumédienne" UN Conference in New York was all about the differences between countries. Within aid agencies, great pains are taken to discriminate between the different circumstances of countries and groups within countries. And the literature of development is replete with such discrimination. (That aid programmes do not follow the dictates of need or performance, but rather, all too often, the interests of the donors is one of the laments of the literature; it does not condemn all aid, however.)

ARGUMENT VIII: "[Aid is] about one quarter of the expected balance of payments deficit for 1973."

In fact only about one third of British aid is a cost to the balance of payments, since most aid is tied to procurement in the UK, and much—that is not tied results in expenditures in the UK. The UK also benefits from that part of non-UK aid which is untied and is spent in the UK. So, on Bauer's figures for total aid and the deficit, aid would be responsible for at most one-twelfth of the deficit. The repayments to the UK on past aid are a plus to the balance of payments (currently about £70m. annually).

ARGUMENT IX: "[The rich countries] are supposed to have caused the poverty of less developed countries in the Third World through exploitation, which is obviously untrue."

Many things have contributed to the poverty of the less developed countries, but surely no one

can deny that *some* activities of the rich countries have been exploitative, and have contributed to their current poverty: the slave trade which deprived various African countries of many of their able-bodied young men and women; the commercial policies of 19th-century Britain which severely hindered India's textile industry; the activities of many multinational corporations today.

Obviously untrue?

ARGUMENT X: "If there is not enough food for the existing population, there could be no large scale increase in numbers."

This proposition is advanced to support the contention that the extent of malnutrition, or "starvation" is exaggerated; it is sheer rubbish. Populations can grow rapidly with high levels of mortality due to malnutrition, as long as births greatly exceed deaths. In India the death rate has been declining under the impact of public health measures while nutritional standards have remained roughly constant; and the death rate has now probably stopped falling, as the impact of these measures has run out, and further mortality decline depends on reducing poverty.

THERE ARE MORE ARGUMENTS, but I have covered the main ones. In my view the case for aid is that, in so far as development in the Third World is constrained by shortage of resources—domestic savings or foreign exchange—concessional lending can help to remove that constraint. It cannot remove all the others, but that does not mean it is useless. If aid yields India a fertiliser plant on lending terms below market rates, that is some help to India and even to poor Indians.

¹ For a start, one might look at I. Brecher and S. A. Abbas, *Foreign Aid and Industrial Development in Pakistan* (C.U.P., 1972); N. H. Jacoby, *US Aid to Taiwan* (Praeger, 1966); E. Mason and R. Asher, *The World Bank since Bretton Woods* (Brookings, 1973).

These works (and many others) attempt to assess actual aid programmes in a balanced manner, certainly not uncritically, but without Bauer's extremism. On some of the theoretical issues, see, for example, G. Papanek, "The Effect of Aid and Other Resource Transfers on Savings and Growth in Less Developed Countries," *Economic Journal*, September 1972; T. Byres (ed.), *Foreign Resources and Economic Development*, (Cass, 1972); E. K. Hawkins, *The Principles of Development Aid* (Penguin, 1970).

² For some evidence that British public opinion does support aid (though much depends on the questions put to test that opinion) see I. Rauta, *Aid and Overseas Development: A Survey of Public Attitudes, Opinions and Knowledge* (UK Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, Social Survey Division, 1971).

A recent poll in the US showed 65% of the sample in favour of foreign aid—and that despite the fact, shown by the same poll, that most people thought aid was 10% of the Federal Budget (it is actually nearer 1%).

India's "aptitudes, attitudes, social institutions and political arrangements" may be less than ideal for the promotion of development—but that is not an overriding reason for the rich countries not to offer aid. Nor will India's policies to promote development be improved if less aid is available. They have enough troubles already.

The main question, on which everything hinges, is whether aid does indeed help. My experience (mainly of India) in both the British aid programme and the World Bank is that it *can* and *does*. I would not claim this for all aid (or all aspects of aid to India). There have indeed been mistakes and failures, but the aid agencies have at least learned from them. The mistakes do not compare in magnitude with those made in other fields, public or private, Concorde or Ford Edsel. It is a matter of judgment whether the costs of aid have outweighed the benefits—the judgment of many observers is that on balance it has been helpful in many countries. That is my judgment too, and one I would be prepared to support with evidence and documentation.¹ Most of us believe that countries deprived of resources by such means as the oil price rise, without any compensating advantages, will suffer in their efforts at development. To believe that countries receiving resources in concessional aid will not profit from it in a general way is too paradoxical for me. Even Peter Bauer accepts this. He just places greater emphasis on the *disadvantages* of aid than the facts warrant.

Given that aid *can* help, there is still a question of whether the rich countries *should* help, and if so why. I take the view that poverty is unpleasant, and that those who can help to eliminate it should do so—not because they have *caused* it, or are guilty, or whatever. (They may be guilty, but that is not a good argument.) This is a simple moral proposition. Bauer would claim that it is irrelevant to aid because individuals experience moral claims, whereas aid is conducted by governments. I cannot agree that our governments are so divorced from public opinion over aid policy as Bauer suggests. His argument that aid has no public consent because it comes from taxation suggests a peculiar view of Western democracy. If most of the public did not experience these moral claims, politicians could make capital out of attacking aid.² In the United States some politicians try to do just this; it is far from obvious, though, that even they represent anything other than a minority view.

BAUER'S PLAUSIBILITY—such as it is—derives from taking mainly the less careful statements of the aid lobby as his targets, rather than the academic literature, and throwing at them a barrage of misleading arguments. Much that he says is true

but is not an argument against aid, or certainly not against all aid. Some of what he says is false. Much aid has gone precisely to the countries which Bauer finds ready for development and not in need of aid—South Korea, Taiwan, Israel—and their economic growth has profited from it greatly. Some aid has been used for rather unsavoury purposes, particularly the pursuit of US strategic and economic interests in Latin America. I myself believe the worst thing about aid is that it makes people in the rich countries think something is being done to promote development while so much more is being done by these countries that hinders it.

By all means let us criticise aid and the arguments for it. But let us criticise the best arguments, and let us look at all the facts, not a selection of them, and not at purported facts which are not facts at all.

How True are Truisms?

A Reply by P. T. Bauer

I SHALL FOCUS on those of Mr Cassen's observations which bear on wider issues.

In his opening sentence Mr Cassen writes that "not all truisms are false." This reveals a simple misconception. No truism is false because a truism is a self-evident statement. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "self-evident or undisputable truth; proposition that states nothing not already implied in one of its terms; hackneyed truth, platitude. . . ."

1. Mr Cassen writes (VIII) that only about one-third of annual aid (of several hundred million pounds) is a cost to the balance of payments because the rest is spent here. If domestic spending did not affect the payments deficit, successive governments would not have restrained domestic expenditure by credit restrictions, tax increases and reduced state spending to improve the balance of payments. This point is both elementary and familiar.

2. Mr Cassen's suggestions (IX)—that Western activities such as African slavery, 19th-century commercial policies, and the operation of multi-national corporations have materially contributed to the poverty of the Third World—are invalid. Those regions of sub-Saharan Africa which are now most backward were outside the orbit of the Atlantic slave trade, and as it happens the most prosperous (apart from South Africa) were affected by it. Over much of Africa slavery was endemic before the arrival of the Europeans, and it was also widespread in Europe. The infamous Atlantic slave trade inflicted vast human suffering but

it was not the cause of African poverty. Indeed, all the foundations and ingredients of modern social and economic life were brought to sub-Saharan Africa by the West during the colonial period. Nineteenth-century free trade may have brought about the decline of the India textile industry, but it enlarged other commercial opportunities there (if it had not India could not have paid for the cheap textiles). To confuse the decline of one activity with that of the economy as a whole is again simple error. The presence of multi-national companies has widened and not restricted economic opportunities in the host countries; and their activities have transformed the pattern of existence over large areas (e.g. South-east Asia and West Africa).

Throughout the Third World the most backward areas are those with few or no contacts with the West. For instance, what has the poverty of the backward societies of Central Asia, Sumatra, Borneo, or that of the aborigines or the desert peoples in many parts of the Third World to do with the prosperity of the West? Comments such as those of Mr Cassen somehow suggest that the incomes of the well-to-do have been extracted from the poor. This is an unfounded notion which has had many disastrous political consequences, especially through the destruction of prosperous but unpopular minorities. Ideas which engender or reinforce a feeling of guilt may assist the advocacy of foreign aid, but this does not validate them; nor should we forget that these same ideas often help to promote inhuman policies.

3. I quoted explicit statements from prominent aid advocates in key positions that official aid was indispensable (and possibly sufficient) for the progress of the Third World. Mr Cassen observes (I) that on certain assumptions a particular rate of growth is unattainable without aid. Very rapid rates of development have often been attained in the Third World, as elsewhere, without aid; and, conversely, even large-scale aid has often produced no development. It is easy to construct formal growth models with assumed very high rates of return on investment. These models are unrelated to reality. They also leave open the question why the investment needs to be in the form of hand-outs. If it is so productive, governments can borrow from abroad commercially and service the loans without hardship to their peoples. It follows that the shortage is not of financial resources (either savings or foreign exchange) but of the social, political and economic factors which promote the effective use of capital.

Mr Cassen's analogy of the usefulness of a table for eating with foreign aid for development is amusing but irrelevant. After disposing of the arguments that aid is necessary or sufficient for development, I discussed at length whether it is likely to be helpful or harmful to development.

In the 1950s the aid lobbies suggested that "a few years of aid" would suffice for self-sustaining growth, notably in India. By now its indefinite continuation is envisaged, confirming that India has progressed from poverty to pauperism. The emphasis on the low level of savings, or on the alleged shortage of foreign exchange, diverts attention from the significant determinants of development; from the pursuit of inappropriate policies; and also from those problems

in many parts of the Third World which reflect the impact of rapid and uneven change rather than those of stagnation.

4. I never disputed that foreign aid could improve current conditions in some recipient countries. However, unlike manna from heaven it can have serious repercussions, many of which retard development. Mr Cassen accepts my view (IV) that aid reinforces the politicisation of life in the Third World, but he does not examine my specific suggestions as to why this is damaging to development, notably by exacerbating political tension and by diverting energy and ambition into the political arena.

5. Mr Cassen also writes that "it is most unlikely that countries would discriminate less against minorities if they had less aid." It is not countries which maltreat minorities, but the governments and their supporters. And large-scale maltreatment of productive minorities (often including expulsion or even massacre) by African and Asian aid-recipient governments has been the rule rather than the exception over the last twenty years. Because aid conceals from their own peoples some of the economic consequences of these inhuman actions it makes it easier to continue them. It is certainly inappropriate, if not immoral, to assist such governments.

6. My contention that national income statistics as estimates of Idcs (less developed countries) are useless for international comparisons was based primarily on the work of Professor Dan Usher (quoted in my article), who argues that these statistics are subject to margins of error of several hundred per cent. Nor can this be taken as simple undergraduate reasoning. Unlike myself, and possibly Mr Cassen, Professor Usher is a highly qualified statistician who has, moreover, lived for years in South-east Asia.

7. Mr Cassen agrees (VI) that aid often supports wasteful projects based on inappropriate external

models, but he adds that private investment does likewise. However, because private investors cannot normally draw on taxpayers' money they are much more likely to take into account the local institutional setting and market conditions generally. To quote but one example, it is not accidental that the East African groundnut scheme was publicly financed. The inability of many aid recipients to service even very soft loans granted under earlier aid agreements suggests that the capital has been used unproductively. (Many of the loans under aid arrangements embody large grant elements, that is, they are very soft; and their real cost has been much reduced by inflation and often also by rescheduling. And yet the recipients find it difficult to service them).

8. Mr Cassen suggests that I have addressed myself to the less careful statements of the aid lobby rather than to the academic literature. In my article I quoted the Pearson Report (whose signatories include leading academics) and also a number of other serious writers. In my book *Dissent on Development* I quoted from a large number of prominent academics in this context.

One could go on to dispose similarly of most of Mr Cassen's other observations, but I suspect that the foregoing will suffice. However, a concluding observation which bears on wider issues may be in order. As is now increasingly recognised, foreign aid is an emotionally and politically motivated transfer of resources, the volume and direction of which depend on the interplay of political forces, economic interests and the vagaries of intellectual fashion. It has even been urged that politically favoured governments of poor countries should receive aid as of right. These realities of the situation should not be overlooked by readers of this exchange between Mr Cassen and myself, which has focused largely on intellectual arguments.

The Key

You offered me the key. I saw
How shrewdly it was cut, how well
The cunning craftsman knew the door
It would control: I saw it all.
You should have offered it before.

The patterns forged in steel or rock
By smith or sculptor have no grace,
Mere remnants of the solid block
Until they fill a chosen space.
You should have given me the lock.

Neil Powell

LETTERS

"Little Men, What Now?"

I DISLIKED the mixture of sarcasm and self-righteousness in Mr Donald Watt's report on the Longford Conference ["Little Men, What Now?", November 1974]. His comments seem one-sided and prompted less by an objective analysis of the participants' plight than by their lack of sophistication and articulateness. Was it the ideologically poor-orphan aspect of the meeting which provoked Mr Watt's irony? I cannot help wondering whether he would have been scornful to the same extent had he attended, let us say, last summer's World Conference on Religion and Peace at Louvain (a kind of Catholic homage to Mao), which was lavish, the centre of media-attention, but not more articulate than the one at which he spoke in London.

Will Mr Watt honour me with answers to these questions:

(1) Should those moral concerns that Hitler also happened to voice, and for this reason, be discredited? To put it concretely, since he disliked pornographic movies, or at least attacked them in public, are we supposed to like them?

(2) Where should unorganised "little men", no longer trusting their Government and parties (and Mr Watt justifies their bewilderment and despair) turn for alternatives or at least a discussion thereof?

(3) When the "little men" do organise, as the Longford Conference shows, they only provoke Mr Watt's scorn. Caught between the Scylla of parliamentary democracy in its present form and the Charybdis of extremist movements, what would he advise them to do?

(4) Would he advise them to become Jesus-Freaks "happily dancing in Trafalgar Square", since he seems to prefer this group (as more genuine? as more serious about the future?) to the other three groups on which he focuses simultaneously his comments?

THOMAS MOLNAR

City University,
New York City

PROFESSOR MOLNAR accuses me of scorn, and irony. There is no scorn in my article and most of the irony is in the situation itself. His questions show that what he really objects to is my being descriptive rather than prescriptive. He also, I think, believes that I chose the title for the article. I did not: the editor borrowed it from Hans Fallada. Nowhere in my text is there a suggestion of contempt.

Now to answer his questions. The first is wide of the point. The ills of inflation are a matter for public debate. They have little or nothing to do with pornography. There is little provable relation between pornography and inflation, whereas the hue and cry against pornography could easily lead to a kind of censorship of an essentially anti-democratic kind. As for the remainder, I am sure Professor Molnar

knows the answers as well as I do. People who ask for "leadership" and to be "told what to do" deserve the leadership and the instructions they get. Simple solutions and simple solution-mongers contribute to disaster rather than averting it. As for the Jesus-freaks, I mentioned them because there were so many more of them than at either of the two meetings, Lord Longford's and the National Front, to which the over-portentous attention of the media was directed. At least they were having fun and doing their best to add to the sum of human happiness.

DONALD WATT

London School of Economics

Jokes & Quotes

MAY I CORRECT a curious error which has crept into George Watson's article "Old Furniture and 'Nouvelle Critique'" in the February number?

Mr Watson attributes the statement *La pensée est un excrément qu'on thésaurise* to Claude Lévi-Strauss, who never said any such thing. Mr Watson can only have got the sentence from an article of mine on *Krapp's Last Tape*, "Spool, Stool, Drool" (April 1973), where it ends the first paragraph, in which Lévi Strauss's name occurs incidentally. I attributed the statement to "an 18th-century *philosophe* whose name escapes my memory." This lapse of memory was a purely rhetorical device, as Mr Watson will see if he cares to look again at the article.

J. G. WEIGHTMAN

London

Amis's "Amerenglish"

AS AN AMERICAN, I hardly wish to extend even further an over-protracted discussion of the obvious—"Aspects of Amerenglish" [ENCOUNTER, January and February]. I must, however, take one more swipe at this very dead horse, at the risk of hearing its bones rattle.

I refer to Kingsley Amis's claim that "genuine linguistic misunderstandings between . . . English people and Americans are . . . rare," which he proceeds to undermine a few lines later in his first example. If his point is that the American hostess meant (and that her husband understood her to mean) herself, while the Englishman meant the dishes, it is ill-taken indeed.

It is true that, after meals, Americans *do* more often use "do the dishes" than they use "wash up", but I cannot have been out of the country long enough to have forgotten that we never use the latter to mean ourselves. (I readily admit that in some areas, a child might be so instructed *before a meal*, but he and the person in charge are in no doubt at all as to the portions of anatomy in question!) I also find it difficult to imagine a social context—on either side of the Atlantic—in which a hostess would announce this intention to her guests!

I shall look into the matter immediately—ahem!—I return to New York, but in the interim I fear that for me Mr Amis, as a commentator on linguistic nuance, is all washed up.

SUSAN HEIMANN LLEWELLYN

Dublin

Moralists & the Law

A Reply—by SHIRLEY ROBIN LETWIN

THE ISSUE BETWEEN Mr Lionel Bloch [ENCOUNTER, May 1975] and me is not about either law or morality, or even what he calls academic fashion, but about the relation between thought and action. He wants all statements, including theoretical ones, to serve as guides to right practical action. If they do not, he rejects them as meaningless or pretentious; and as a result he has misunderstood what I was saying ("Morality & Law, November 1974).

My argument rested partly on a distinction between government conceived of as a ruler of a civil association and as manager of a public enterprise. Understood in the first sense, the government's function is to establish the rules within which the members of the civil association pursue their private purposes in an orderly fashion. Understood in the second sense, a government directs the activities of its subjects so as to further the goal or goals that it is pursuing. To clarify this distinction does not imply that one of the two is more desirable. To establish that would require a separate and different sort of argument.

Mr Bloch consistently misunderstands and misapplies this distinction. He says that if the fact that a government turns itself "into a nursemaid as well as a rule maker" means that it adulterates its character as ruler of a civil association, then "our civil association in England is rotten-to-the-core considering all the services which it already employs."

He puts this argument forward as though it demolishes the distinction. On the contrary, it reinforces it. To the extent that a government undertakes to serve as a public nursemaid, it abandons its character as ruler and takes on the character of a manager. Whether it should do so is a question to be argued; but Mr Bloch seems to feel that because in England it has done so, we ought to jettison the distinction that enables us to understand what has been done. I gather that he likes to have the government of England act as a nursemaid in some degree at least; if so, his preference for one of the two possibilities endorses the theoretical distinction between them.

GOVERNMENTS OF BOTH KINDS make rules, which people living under them are obliged to take into account when engaged in pursuing their private goals. What differs is the relations of each sort of government to private projects. A government acting as manager of an enterprise will direct private projects toward furthering the goal pursued by that government. Its relation to the managers of private undertakings, whether factories or hospitals, will be like that between the general of an army and one of his battalion commanders; if the general decides that the army must move forward quickly, he may direct the battalion to abandon its wounded or to make a suicidal attack. Within an enterprise the objective of the whole reigns supreme over the objectives of any part; that is the nature of an enterprise though

external constraints may prevent it from behaving consistently with its nature.

By contrast the rules made by a civil association do not subject its citizens to any goal, since a civil association has no substantive goal. The ruler of a civil association would not subsidise hospitals and suppress shoe factories, or the reverse, because he entertains no objective that could warrant such direction. But he does make rules which influence the relations among the members of the civil association.

WHEN MR BLOCH points out that "the law in most advanced industrial countries" limits the power of private undertakings to pursue their own objectives, he has not denied the distinction between civil association and the opposite. Neither has he identified the character of the governments which have passed those laws. If they did so in order to subject private purposes to a substantive goal, then they were acting in the character of an enterprise manager; if not, then as the ruler of a civil association. To say that cannibals and gourmets both eat meat does not prove that they are identical.

It might help Mr Bloch to understand the distinction between an enterprise association and a civil association if he considered that it is like the difference between Athens and Sparta as seen at the time. Aristotle did not deny that all Athenians (farmers, merchants, doctors) were obliged to obey the laws of Athens when he said that the laws of Sparta were directed to a different purpose—making soldiers.

What is wrong with talking of "a measure of consent to the form of government under which we happen to live", as Mr Bloch prefers to do, is that it does not specify what we are "consenting" to, or in what manner, or what we mean by a "form of government." My object in the essay was to clarify the differences between some of the alternatives that might be involved in such vague talk.

THE INCONSISTENCY that Mr Bloch discovers in what I say about the relation between notions of decency and legislation displays even more obviously the confusion produced by his insistence on interpreting all talk as a recommendation for practical action. I said that the decision on whether a law is desirable will almost always reflect some judgment about what is decent or indecent. This does not imply that all conduct considered indecent is or ought to be made illegal. Therefore it cannot be contradicted by the fact that in England or elsewhere soliciting is illegal. It does imply that even if all Englishmen found soliciting indecent, they might consistently oppose legislation against it. This is because it does not follow from recognising that our laws *reflect* our notions of decency, that whenever we judge certain conduct to be indecent we are logically obliged to make a law against it.

Decency is not the only standard for law. Mr Bloch does not seem to regard as irrelevant such

other considerations as whether a law for a particular purpose can be accurately framed or effectively enforced. Nor does he doubt the relevance of choosing between conflicting goods when making practical choices. His charge of inconsistency against me contradicts the implication of his own statement that "the area of conflict between preference for living in a certain manner and being associated in a certain manner is unlimited", a statement with which I entirely agree and did not deny in my essay.

In fact, Mr Bloch is being much more fashionable than I in his advocacy of the belief, taught to us by pragmatists, Marxists, and many sociologists, that

every statement is a prescription, implicit or explicit, for action. Oddly enough this belief is at least partly responsible for the social disorder that Mr Bloch deplures. We are bedevilled by the conviction that being "tolerant" means refusing to make judgments about true and false, good and bad. This confusion is partly inspired by the entirely reasonable conviction that because we judge someone to be a liar, a scoundrel, or a thug, that does not in itself justify our locking him up. But the conclusion that therefore we ought never to judge anyone follows from thinking, as Mr Bloch does, that every assertion is a prescription for action. Therefore we cannot say that one thing is

In the Margin: From Sartre to Solzhenitsyn



IN MY ALL-TOO-concise account of Sartre's politics—his "to-the-Finland-Station" delusions which took him not to a revolution but to Baader's Stuttgart jail-cell—I happened to make one important omission ("Ulrike Meinhof & the Baader-Meinhof Gang", ENCOUNTER, June). It is well known that Sartre inspired Picasso's famous dove and

blessed Jeanson's infamous valise of plastic bombs—thus giving peace its true definition as war. And it is true that by saluting every Left-Fascist dictatorship from Stalin and Mao and Tito to Castro and Ho Chi Minh he made it clear that slavery is really a form of authentic freedom.

But Sartre's ingenuity as a political philosopher and ideologue went even further. It takes pure dialectical skill to be able to argue throughout the post-War period—three decades of evidence about Soviet concentration camps from the pioneering Dallin-Nicolaevsky documentation to Solzhenitsyn's Gulag tomes—that reality is really fantasy. The camps simply did not exist. For Sartre it was always my Left, my Revolution, right or wrong; and neither could do any wrong. Mistakes, yes; horrors and crimes, perhaps; but a deep unexpungeable historic wrong, jamais! As he once tried to instruct Merleau-Ponty:

"To keep hope alive one must, in spite of all mistakes, horrors, and crimes, recognise the obvious superiority of the socialist camp."

Opposition, therefore, to any such mistakes, horrors, and crimes was always tantamount to treason to the Revolution and the Left, and an unforgivable desertion to the ranks of the hated bourgeoisie.

"An anti-communist is a cur, I'll stick to that. . . ."

So it is, and I should have underlined it, that for Sartre the realities of Soviet oppression—and a list of victims running into the millions—were systematically irrationalised out of existence. Attempts to call this to his attention he always dismissed as "poisonous nothings", comprising only "one falsification, two contradictions, and a lie." When one Paris reviewer objected to the approval of interning Pasternak's friend, Olga Ivinskaya (and her daughter) in a labour camp, Sartre wrote to France Observateur (12 December 1963):

"What right have you to question what Simone de Beauvoir says about Pasternak's friend? Have you been to the Soviet Union? Have you conducted an enquiry as we have? As regards the Soviets, naivety today takes the form of automatic mistrust. It is the reflex of Pavlov's dog which salivates when it hears the sound of a bell. You foam at the mouth at the sound of the words 'Soviet Russia'. . . . You will die empty-handed."

What, if anything, could change his mind? It was invincible to the arguments of old friends: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Raymond Aron, David Rousset, André Malraux, Albert Camus. He would have his moments of troubled doubt and even reflective reconsideration—as in his famous essay on "Stalin's Ghost"—but he always returned compulsively to the articles of faith of (in Merleau-Ponty's phrase) "an ultra-Bolshevist."

FOR SARTRE, THEN, reality and mythology were deeply interfused, and he could pick and choose what facts and what fantasies he preferred to live with. In his sophisticated reply to Albert Camus (and I think I was right to point out that so long as Camus was alive Sartre's amoral pseudo-theology was always transparent), he tried this devious argument:

"Let's be serious about this, Camus. Please tell me what feelings do Rousset's revelations [in his book about Soviet concentration camps, following his work on Nazi death camps] arouse in the heart of an anti-Communist? Desperation? Sadness? Shame about mankind? Cut it out. . . . The one response that such information arouses in him—and I don't find it easy to say it—is joy. Joy that

worse than another without being taken to mean that it ought to be disposed of with severity. Such nonsense has spread barbarism and chaos, both intellectual and social.

Mr BLOCH CANNOT RECOGNISE the possibility, let alone the value, of thought for the sake of understanding rather than acting because he has adopted a conception of human beings—very fashionable indeed now—that does not allow for such a possibility. He sees men as pursuers of “interests” or “mere inclinations”, subject to mysterious powers such as “expediency” and “whims of fate.” Most of them are an

at long last he has found evidence and can stare at what for so long he longed to see. . . .”

A LAST TWIST, full of existential irony. On one of their recent trips to Soviet Russia a message was sent to Alexander Solzhenitsyn that Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir would like to call on him. They were astonished that this was not possible to arrange. Solzhenitsyn was still working on his Gulag Archipelago—and why should he shake the hands of the world's most consistent apologists for the Gulag? What should they gossip about? Did he need to have nice literary praise for Matryona's Home (which had been published in Temps Modernes)? He told the Sartre go-between exactly how things stood. As Beauvoir ingenuously narrates the incident in her recent book of memoirs (All Said and Done, 1974, p.321),

“... Then one day Lena told us that Solzhenitsyn had telephoned: he wanted to see her. We thought it was to fix an appointment with us. But when she came back having talked with him for an hour she was quite out of countenance. ‘He does not want to see you,’ she said to Sartre.

“Why not? Solzhenitsyn had not explained himself very clearly. . . .”

Cut off from Russian realities to the bitter end, they couldn't quite make out what the difficulty could have been. Whatever could Solzhenitsyn have meant with the excuse that “I really do not feel that I can talk to him: I should suffer too much. . . .”? Could it have been that the anti-Communist Solzhenitsyn was, in Sartre's eyes, really “a cur”, in whose heart there was only overflowing “joy” at the miseries of his countrymen in the Gulag camps?

One recalls a phrase of Sartre about “whisky and virtue” being “our chief diversion.” In Moscow, vodka and innocence were more appropriate. As Simone de Beauvoir writes in All Said and Done:

“His [Solzhenitsyn's] reaction surprised us. There was no doubt that Sartre knew him better than he knew Sartre. . . .”

Here errs Mme de Beauvoir. Solzhenitsyn knew Sartre well enough.

M.J.L.

“apathetic mass”; but the elect are aware of the fact that their “inclinations”, “whims”, and “interests” must be restrained by laws. They have no desire to understand anything, but only to get and to do what they want.

I do not talk as Mr Bloch does of “balancing individual interests” against “the impinging demands of communal morality” because I understand a human community to consist of rational beings trying to live together in a certain manner. The manner may be understood in different ways, one of which has been called “individualism”, but this is as much a communal morality as any other. What distinguishes “individualists” (in the sense of men who prefer a civil association) is not an objection to rules or a desire to pursue “interests” at the expense of “morality” or “charity”, but a particular conception of the proper purpose of the rules that govern them. They are eager to preserve their independence and individuality and to associate with men who share this view.

Such a preference is not a “mere inclination” or a “whim.” It is not like the preference for chocolate cake at lunch. It is profound, pervasive, and steady because it reflects an understanding that must be present somehow in a man if he is sane, even if he belongs to the “apathetic mass.” To distinguish such preferences from fleeting whims and inclinations, I called them “commitments.” This does *not* imply in the least that every man decides every day whether or not to leave his country. It *does* imply that whether an Englishman finds the present state of England congenial or would like to change it will reflect his convictions about what is a desirable way to live and to be associated with others. Every man who is not demented will have such convictions, though these may be more or less primitive, self-conscious, or coherent. Some may not like it, stay nevertheless, and do nothing about it. Nothing I said denies this because it does not bear on it.

MR BLOCH IS ANXIOUS to find “guidance” on what to do towards preserving “orderly living”, and he is disappointed not to have found such enlightenment in my essay. I regret his disappointment, and I share his concern with preserving orderly living. But I cherish orderly living because it leaves us free to do something other than minding the shop. One of the things that we might do is to reflect on what we mean by “orderly living”, whether it is like the order kept in a herd of cattle, a nursery, an army, a factory. Clarity of thought is, I believe, one of the finer objects that orderly living allows us to pursue; and a proper concern of a journal such as ENCOUNTER, which some readers at least value just because it is not a manual for politicians. But clear thinking might also serve Mr Bloch's preoccupation by making it more likely that our legislators will know what they are about when they decide on measures to preserve orderly living.

I would not oblige Mr Bloch to share my interest in clarity of thought. But I utterly oppose his conviction that all sensible and unpretentious talk about law must serve *his* consuming interest in practical action.

SHIRLEY ROBIN LETWIN

London

Kansas City

BOOK BURNING: This city's clean-air supervision has thwarted the plans of a church's youth department for a book-burning.

Led by the Rev. Robert Gilstrap, pastor of the First United Pentecostal Church, a group of about 30 persons marched from the downtown area to a park to burn books they said were of a pornographic or occult nature.

However, open burning here is illegal and pornographic material is no exception, said George Delapp, the supervisor.

"Then we'll go home", Mr. Gilstrap said. "We are not a violent group. We were just coming out here to burn some literature."

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

London

WORD GEOGRAPHY: Dialect spreads or shrinks under the pressures and influences of education, print, radio, war, geography and international contacts.

The full Oxford Dictionary contains over 400,000 words and even the concise edition over 45,000, all current. Too rich an inheritance?

Standard English, itself a dialect derived from the historical accident that the capital is in the south, inevitably tends to weaken others. Thus the Scandinavian "stithy" is in retreat before the Standard "anvil" (Old English: anfilte) and "urchin" (Old French: herichon) before OE "hedgehog". "Lewse," "pig-hole" and "pig-hull" are holding out with mixed success against "pigsty" in the North and West.

On the other hand, Midlands "gorse" is moving in on southern "furze" and northern "whin." But there seems no hope in the north-east for the Old Norse "stee", meaning a ladder, and not much for "teem" (ON) against "pour" (etym. dub.) as applied to tea.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

ASININITY: When did the grand old English word "arse" start to be pronounced "ass", American-style, and now, even in "The Times", so spelled? I remember the pleasure when, as a student [writes Alan Brien] of English literature, reading that Elizabethan farrago of tedium, "Gammer Gurton's Needle", I discovered the presumed origin of that traditional bawlerised, maternal reproach "Faith, an' thou wouldst lose thy arse an' it were loose."

I'd like to keep it in the language, though mostly I agree that words are living things and cannot be forced to revert to their etymological origins if the spirit of the age is against it. So I no longer try to point out that "prestigious" ought to mean adept at sleight-of-hand because nobody will believe me. But when "uninterested" and "disinterested" become identical, we lose a valuable term and gain nothing.

So "arse" it should remain. Everybody, after all, or sometimes first of all, is born with one. To own an "ass", you have to be both rich, and probably eccentric.

SUNDAY TIMES

London

STICKY STORY: The play, by Michael Frayn, is set in the cuttings library of a provincial newspaper, and its climax occurs when most of the cast scatter the cuttings all over the stage. This was allowable in the play's original production at Hampstead, because it was a club and less stringent regulations apply. But the Mayfair is a public theatre and the fire authorities insisted that all the cuttings should be fireproof.

This involved dipping them in a proofing solution at the last minute and it was touch and go whether they would be dry in time. The director told me the process was expensive, costing twice as much as the entire stage set. Moreover, some of the cuttings were not quite dry, and instead of flying about the stage with proper abandon, they stuck together and hit the floor with a thud.

After every performance they have to be separated and ironed flat to look fresh for next time. If the play runs for months they will wear out, and a fresh set will have to be fireproofed.

THE TIMES

Cologne

DEAD OR ALIVE: The question that was put by the "Deutsche Welle", the German long-range broadcasting station for foreign listeners, was: "What German personalities would you want to meet if you had a chance to visit Germany today?" Among the favourites were: Franz Beckenbauer, the football star; Chancellor Helmut Schmidt; ex-Chancellor Willy Brandt. But there were a considerable number of choices for: Karl Marx, Johann Strauss, and Dr Konrad Adenauer.

DIE WELT

Westminster

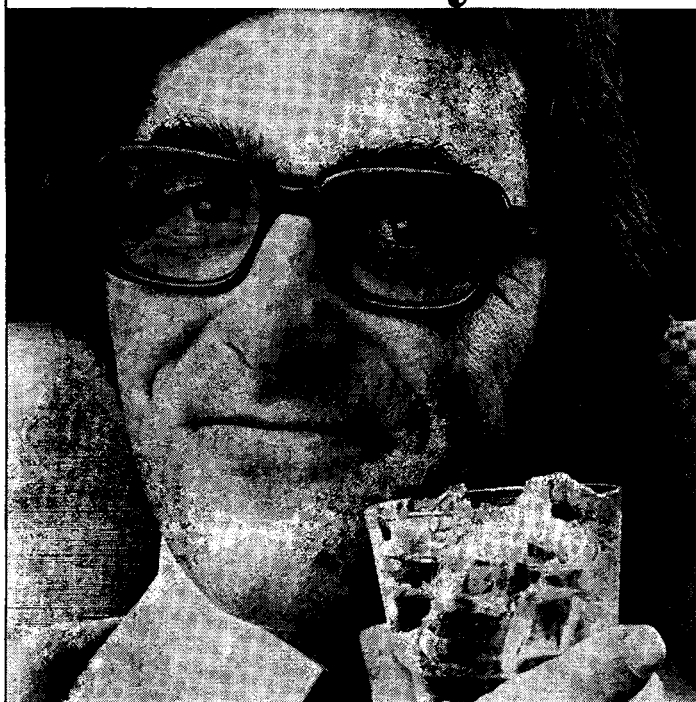
GAME OF THE NAME: The epithets our masters are flinging at one another nowadays are growing more robust. After Mr Michael Foot's description of Mr Reg Prentice as an "economic illiterate", we have Mr Denis Healey calling his "Tribune" comrades, in effect, "irresponsible lunatics."

Let me provide a few more that Ministers can keep in their pockets, ready burnished for instant use. Inane buffoon, fatuous poltroon, obtuse moon-calf, blockish blunderer, doltish burler, cretinous driveller, mulish moron, addle-pated chucklehead and maundering bumpkin.

Did I hear someone call Westminster the unmarried mother of parliaments?

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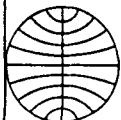
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